

BAZI BAZOUM

^{OR}
A STRANGE DETECTIVE.

BY CHARLES MATTHEW.



WARD, LOCK & CO. LONDON MELBOURNE & NEW YORK

DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD DIE.

Fennings' Children's Powders prevent
Convulsions.

ARE COOLING AND SOOTHING.

FENNINGS' CHILDREN'S POWDERS

For Children Cutting their Teeth. To prevent Convulsions.

Do not contain Calomel, Opium, Morphia, or anything injurious to a tender babe.

Sold in Stamped Boxes at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d (great saving), with full directions. Sent post free for 15 Stamps. Direct to ALFRED FENNINGS, West Cowes, I.W.

READ FENNINGS' EVERY MOTHER'S BOOK, which contains valuable hints on Feeding, Teething, Weaning, Sleeping, etc. Ask your Chemist for a FREE copy.

FENNINGS' EVERY MOTHER'S BOOK sent Post Free on application by letter or post-card. Direct ALFRED FENNINGS, West Cowes, I.W.

COUGHS, COLDS, BRONCHITIS.

FENNINGS' LUNG HEALERS,

THE BEST REMEDY TO CURE ALL

COUGHS, COLDS, ASTHMAS, &c.

Sold in Boxes at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d., with directions. Sent post free for 15 stamps. Direct to A. FENNINGS, West Cowes, I.W.

The largest size Boxes, 2s. 9d. (35 stamps, post free), contain three times the quantity of the small boxes.

READ FENNINGS' EVERYBODY'S DOCTOR. Sent post free, 13 stamps. Direct A. FENNINGS, West Cowes, I.W.

EASY TEETHING.

SAFE TEETHING.

BRONCHITIS CURED.

DO NOT UNTIMELY DIE!

SORE THROATS CURED WITH ONE DOSE.

FENNINGS' FEVER CURER!

BOWEL COMPLAINTS cured with One Dose.

TYPHUS, or Low Fever, cured with Two Doses.

DIPHTHERIA cured with Three Doses.

SCARLET FEVER cured with Four Doses.

DYSENTERY cured with Five Doses.

Sold in Bottles at 1s. 1½d. each, with full directions, by all Chemists.

Read FENNINGS' EVERYBODY'S DOCTOR. Sent post free for 13 stamps. Direct A. FENNINGS, West Cowes, I.W.

SORE THROATS

CURED

WITH ONE DOSE.

WITH ONE DOSE.

CURED

SORE THROATS

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS, CHANCERY LANE.

THREE per CENT. INTEREST allowed on DEPOSITS, repayable on demand.

TWO per CENT. INTEREST on CURRENT ACCOUNTS calculated on the minimum monthly balances, when not drawn below £100.

STOCKS, SHARES, and ANNUITIES purchased and sold, and Letters of Credit and Circular Notes issued.

The Bank undertakes for its Customers, free of charge, the custody of Deeds, Writings, and other Securities and Valuables; and the collection of Bills of Exchange, Dividends, and Coupons.

SAVINGS DEPARTMENT

For the encouragement of Thrift the Bank receives small sums on deposit, and allows Interest, at the rate of THREE PER CENT. per Annum on each completed £1. The Interest is added to the principal on the 31st March annually.

THE BIRKBECK ALMANACK contains full particulars, and may be obtained post free, on application.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, MANAGER.

HOW to PURCHASE A HOUSE for TWO GUINEAS PER MONTH

OR A PLOT OF LAND FOR FIVE SHILLINGS PER MONTH. with immediate possession. Apply at the Office of the BIRKBECK FREEHOLD LAND SOCIETY.

THE BIRKBECK ALMANACK contains full particulars, and may be had post free, on application to:

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, MANAGER.

SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS, CHANCERY LANE.

IMPORTANT TO ALL.

ENO'S "FRUIT SALT."

"No effort, however small, put forth for the right cause, fails of its effect. No voice, however feeble, lifted up for Truth, ever dies amidst confused noises of Time. Through discords of sin, sorrow, pain, and wrongs, it rises in a deathless melody, whose notes of wailing are hereafter to be changed to those of triumph, as they blend with the great harmony of a reconciled Universe."—WHITTIER.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.—"A new invention is brought before the public, and commands success. A score of *abominable imitations* are immediately introduced by the unscrupulous, who, in copying the original closely enough to deceive the public, and yet not so exactly as to infringe upon legal rights, exercise an ingenuity that, employed in an original channel, could not fail to secure reputation and profit."—ADAMS.

SUPERIOR TO ALL OTHER SALINES.—"Dear Sir,—Having been in the habit of taking your 'FRUIT SALT' for many years, I think it only right to tell you that I consider it a most invaluable medicine, and far superior to all other saline mixtures I have ever tried. I am never without a bottle of it in the house, as I find it possesses three most desirable qualities—namely, it is pleasant to the taste, promptly efficacious, and leaves no unpleasant after effects. I do not wish my name to appear, but apart from the publication of that you are welcome to make use of this testimonial if it is of service.—A DEVONSHIRE LADY.—January 25, 1889."

HEADACHE AND DISORDERED STOMACH.—"After suffering for nearly two and a half years from severe headache and disordered stomach, and after trying almost everything and spending much money without finding any benefit, I was recommended by a friend to try your 'FRUIT SALT,' and before I had finished one bottle I found it doing me a great deal of good, and now I am restored to my usual health; and others I know that have tried it have not enjoyed such good health for years.—Yours most truly, ROBERT HUMPHREYS, Post Office, Barrasford."

IN THE BATTLE OF THIS LIFE ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' is an imperative hygienic need, or necessary adjunct. It keeps the blood pure, prevents fevers and acute inflammatory diseases, removes the injurious effects of stimulants, narcotics, such as alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee, by natural means; thus restores the nervous system to its normal condition, by preventing the great danger of poisoned blood and over-cerebral activity, sleeplessness, irritability, worry, etc.

CAUTION.—Examine each Bottle and see the Capsule is marked ENO'S "FRUIT SALT." Without it you have been imposed on by a worthless imitation. Sold by all Chemists.
Prepared only at Eno's "Fruit Salt" Works, London, S.E., by J. C. Eno's Patent.

O BLESSED HEALTH! HE WHO HAS THEE HAS LITTLE MORE TO WISH FOR! THOU ART ABOVE GOLD AND TREASURE!

"'Tis thou who enlargest the soul and open'st all its powers to receive instruction and to cherish virtue. He who has thee has little more to wish for, and he that is so wretched as to want thee, wants everything with thee."—STEELE.

ENO'S "VEGETABLE MOTO."

(A Stomach, Bile, or Liver Pill.)

TO AID NATURE without force or strain, use "ENO'S VEGETABLE MOTO" (a simple Vegetable Extract), occasionally a desirable adjunct to ENO'S "FRUIT SALT." They perform their work "silently as the twilight comes when the day is done," and the patient is much astonished to find his bilious attack, etc., has completely fled before the simple and natural onslaught of the Moto. You cannot overstate their great value in keeping the Blood pure and preventing disease.

Eno's "Vegetable Moto," of all Chemists, price 1s. 1d.; post free, 1s. 3d.

PREPARED ONLY AT ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" WORKS, LONDON, S.E.

KEATING'S POWDER.

KILLS { BUGS,
FLEAS,
MOTHS,
BEETLES,
MOSQUITOES.

HARMLESS TO ANIMALS.

HARMLESS TO ANIMALS.

KILLS { BUGS,
FLEAS,
MOTHS,
BEETLES,
MOSQUITOES.

The PUBLIC are CAUTIONED that packages of the genuine powder bear the autograph of THOMAS KEATING. Sold in Tins, 6s. & 1s. each everywhere.

BAZI BAZOUM:
OR,
A STRANGE DETECTIVE.

FOR
IMPROVED AND ECONOMICAL COOKERY,
USE

LIEBIG COMPANY'S
EXTRACT OF MEAT.

AND SEE THAT
EACH JAR BEARS

J. Liebig

IN BLUE INK.

BAZI BAZOUM;

OR,

A Strange Detective.

BY

CHARLES MATTHEW, M.A.



WARD, LOCK AND CO.,
LONDON, NEW YORK, AND MELBOURNE.

1889.

—
[All rights reserved.]

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—THE MANOR HOUSE	9
II.—“THE SHADOW OF A FEAR”.	12
III.—HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR	17
IV.—“FIDUS ACHATES”	21
V.—MURDER MOST FOUL	26
VI.—“LET US MEET AND QUESTION THIS MOST BLOODY PIECE OF WORK”	30
VII.—THREE WITNESSES	34
VIII.—AT THE FAIR	38
IX.—BY THE PARK GATE	43
X.—IN THE RED ROOM	49
XI.—FROM SCOTLAND YARD	52
XII.—ON THE TRACK	57
XIII.—MY WIFE AND I	60
XIV.—ARRESTED	66
XV.—INSPECTOR STRATTON	71
XVI.—AT WORK	76
XVII.—CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE	80
XVIII.—UNDER EXAMINATION	85
XIX.—THE STORY OF HIS LIFE	91
XX.—MYSTIFICATION	94
XXI.—FACE TO FACE	99
XXII.—AN ALIBI	102

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII.—IN EGYPT	106
XXIV.—MR. ISAACSON AT HOME	109
XXV.—MABEL SEYMOUR	114
XXVI.—TROOPER BARNETT	119
XXVII.—BIRKET-EL-AZIB	123
XXVIII.—ORIENTAL MYSTERY	128
XXIX.—RESCUED AND LOST	134
XXX.—“ARCADES AMBO”	139
XXXI.—AT THE ADELPHI	142
XXXII.—THE CIGAR CASE	145
XXXIII.—SCREWED IN	149
XXXIV.—IN CUSTODY	154
XXXV.—UNACCOUNTABLE	159
XXXVI.—CONSULTATION	163
XXXVII.—BAZI BAZOUM ON THE TRACK	167
XXXVIII.—AT SOUTHAMPTON	173
XXXIX.—RUN TO EARTH	176
XL.—BEFORE THE CURTAIN	179

BAZI BAZOUM.



CHAPTER I.

THE MANOR HOUSE.

WOODVILLE is one of the prettiest towns in the New Forest;—perhaps elsewhere it would only be called a large village, but in this part of the world a little goes a long way;—and the Town Hall, which was built a few years ago, has given to the place not exactly an air of pretentiousness, but a certain position among its neighbours. It is not, however, necessary to give any detailed description of Woodville, as our story is only incidentally connected with it.

Hardly a quarter of a mile beyond the last house in the town is an enclosure of ten or twelve acres, scarcely to be dignified with the name of a park, were it not for some magnificent old trees which it contains, and for the fact that it is surrounded by a well-built stone wall, about eight feet high.

A pair of large iron gates, painted black, with the ornamental scroll work picked out in gold, formed the entrance to a road which led through an avenue of fine lime-trees straight up to a house at the distance of about 200 yards. Nothing could be more picturesque than the appearance of this house, built of red brick, only two storeys high, partly covered with ivy, having two projecting wings, and a central tower, forming a capital E, in honour of the Virgin Queen, during whose reign it had been built. It had fortunately escaped all modern improvements, and the old stone mullioned windows had been left in their original

beauty, though carefully preserved from decay. In short, it looked exactly what it was—an old English Manor House, evidently both comfortable and picturesque, while the numerous stacks of red brick chimneys, with ornamental mouldings, gave it a certain air of dignity and stability. In the rear were large stables and extensive farm buildings, which, however, were at some little distance from the house. A short flight of stone steps led up to the principal entrance.

It should be mentioned here, that a short time before the commencement of our tale, Woodville Manor House, with about 200 acres of surrounding land, had been purchased by a rich Liverpool merchant of the name of Robinson, an elderly widower, without any children of his own, but devotedly attached to a nephew and niece, orphans, whom he had adopted on the death of their parents. Mr. Robinson had been so much occupied by his business, that he had only been able to visit Woodville two or three times since he had bought the property, and each visit had been a short one; but he left everything in charge of a thoroughly trustworthy steward, John Armstrong by name, who, after many years passed at sea, was glad to find a comfortable home in this quiet retreat in the New Forest. He was a hale and hearty man, between forty and fifty years of age, and since his arrival at Woodville had learnt a good deal of the practical work of a farm, as Mr. Robinson intended to purchase an adjoining estate which would shortly be in the market.

John Armstrong, like his master, was a widower, but he had a charming daughter, Mary, not quite eighteen, who had accompanied him when he came from the North, and who was proud to show him how much she had learnt at the dairy-farm in Cheshire, where she had been brought up by her grandparents during her father's absence at sea.

Arthur Denison, the merchant's nephew, a good-looking young fellow of five-and-twenty, in the Hussars, had seen some service in India and Egypt; and having obtained three months' leave, was looking forward with the greatest pleasure to meeting his uncle and sister, on his arrival in London, after an absence of some years.

His sister Maude, who was a good deal younger than him-

self, having only just entered her eighteenth year, was on the point of leaving the school in Paris where she had completed her education; and it had been arranged that her uncle, who had business on the Continent, should escort her to London, where they would await the arrival of her brother, and all three would go down to the New Forest, for a long and pleasant holiday.

So much by way of introduction; now for our story.

The 27th of September, 1883, was one of those glorious mornings when summer melts away into autumn, under the influence of a sun which, by its rays, brightens, warms, and refreshes nature, just awakening to receive it.

Woodville church clock had just struck eight, when a young man came up to the entrance gates of the Manor House, and seizing the chain which was attached to a large bell inside, gave it a long and vigorous pull. The velveteen jacket and leathern gaiters, together with the double-barrelled gun, left little doubt as to his occupation, while the well-filled game bag, and panting retriever who followed him, showed that he had turned the early morning hours to good account.

Having, as we said, given a vehement pull to the bell, which echoed loudly among the trees, he leant against one of the stone pillars, which flanked the gate on either side, and waited for some one to give him admittance.

His dog lost no time in lying down at his feet, and, placing his nose on his extended paws, closed his eyes, and seemed to be asleep.

But all at once, moved by some impulse for which there seemed no sufficient reason, he suddenly jumped up, sniffed the air in every direction, but especially towards the Manor House, then rushed up to the gate, and did all in his power to squeeze himself through the bars. Not succeeding in this, he set up a long and dismal howl.

Tony Scott, for that was the name of the young game-keeper, startled by this sudden outbreak, gave the dog rather a savage kick, and cried out, "What are you up to, Ranger? Any one would think you were baying at the moon. Let's have no more of it. To heels, sir!"

The dog obeyed, mainly from fear of receiving further chastisement, and lay down again close to his master, but

with his eyes constantly fixed on the gate, and with his nostrils trembling from excitement did not dare to howl, but from time to time uttered a suppressed moan.

Two or three more minutes passed. There was no sound of approaching feet under the lime-trees, and nothing showed that the bell had been heard at the Manor House.

"Ah, well," muttered Tony, "Master John and his daughter are both of them taking it easy this morning. I thought I rang loud enough to wake the dead. But here goes again."

So saying, he seized the bell-handle once more, and rang even louder than he had done the first time.

CHAPTER II.

"THE SHADOW OF A FEAR."

WHILST he was making a fearful noise, a small group of three persons came up to the gate.

A young lad of fifteen led the way, having on a blue apron, and a butcher's tray carefully balanced on his head.

Close behind him came a young girl who had a basket in her right hand, and in her left a net, between the meshes of which shone the bright and glistening scales of some fine fresh-water fish.

The country postman brought up the rear, with his bag of letters, from which he had just taken one to be delivered at the Manor House.

These new arrivals came up to Tony, who was kicking his heels impatiently against the gate-post, and muttering to himself when he found that his second peal at the bell produced no better result than the first.

They stopped a few paces from him.

"You seem to have some business here pretty early this morning, Mr. Gamekeeper," said the young girl, smiling; "but what has put you out so? We heard you ever so far off, cursing and swearing dreadful."

"Why," answered Tony rather crossly; "because I've

been ringing here for the last ten minutes or more, and that's enough to vex any one. Little Alice, who goes to the Manor House to help Mary Armstrong, called late yesterday evening to tell me to bring up some game as soon as I could in the morning. So I was up by daybreak, and have brought a hare and three brace of partridges. I promised Alice that I would not be later than eight o'clock, and here I was when the church clock struck. I've been ringing almost ever since, and yet no one comes. Deuced queer, isn't it?"

"Ah," said the young girl, whose name was Sophy; "yesterday evening, after leaving you, Alice came to our house to order some fish. So father laid his lines, and caught a fine tench, that weighs about three pounds, two beautiful trout, and some perch. They are almost alive now. Won't Mary be pleased!"

"And just look what I've got!" exclaimed Jem, the butcher's boy; "*such* a leg of mutton, a sirloin of beef with a lovely undercut, and half a dozen veal cutlets. Don't I wish they'd ask me to dinner to-day! Miss Mary sent word that we was to let them have the most primest meat we'd got, and I'm blessed if it ain't."

"Good heavens!" cried Tony; "why, any one would think they were going to have a wedding breakfast. Have they got any company up yonder?"

"Alice told me that Mary was expecting some one," said Sophy. "Perhaps it's Mr. Robinson."

"Perhaps it is," rejoined the postman, speaking for the first time; "for I brought a letter yesterday for John Armstrong, with the London postmark on it, and I know it was from Mr. Robinson by the writing. I wish," he continued, "one of you would take charge of this letter, for it seems as if no one was coming to-day. If I were kept waiting like this at every house, I should not get through my round till nightfall."

"All right, Mr. Higgins," replied Tony; "hand me over the letter, and I'll see it's delivered safe enough."

The country postman wished them all good-morning, and started on his round again.

All this time while they were chatting the Manor House was as silent as the grave, and not a sound was heard in the lime-tree avenue.

"Oh, come," exclaimed the gamekeeper; "this is too much of a good thing! I'll give them a rouser;" and so saying, he pulled the bell with all his might for nearly a minute.

As he left off, a sound, faint, indistinct, indescribable, fell on the ears of the three listeners.

"Did you hear that?" asked Tony.

"Yes," replied Sophy; "I thought I heard something; but what could it be?"

"I fancied it sounded like a groan," said the butcher's boy, turning pale.

At this moment Ranger, the large retriever, rushed up to the gate, threw his head back, and howled even more dismally than he had done before.

Tony, in a rage at the noise made by the dog, seized him roughly, and flung him across the road, where he lay trembling, but not daring to utter any further sound.

The little party listened intently, and looked through the bars of the gate, but could neither see nor hear anything more. They began to be uneasy, and Tony expressed this vague feeling by saying,

"All this seems to me very queer. I don't half like it. John Armstrong is always up by daybreak, summer and winter; and after dark, as I pass under the wall, I can hear the old sailor whistling and talking to himself as he goes his rounds."

"And Mary, too," interrupted Sophy; "she's not one of your lazy sort. She's up the first thing in the morning, and sees to the feeding of all the animals."

"And then we must not forget Cæsar," continued Tony; "why, if so much as a fly buzzes, he gives tongue, and barks himself hoarse. And now, here have I been ringing away, and he hasn't taken the smallest notice. Ranger, too, has been howling like mad, and Cæsar never answered him. I wonder whether John and Mary have gone out, and taken the dog with them."

Sophy shook her head. "What! Gone out? Both of them? Never! Why, Mary knew we were all coming; and even if they had gone out, they would have left Cæsar to guard the place."

"That's true," rejoined Tony; "and yet, you see, there's

no one moving. I wonder whether anything's happened in the night?"

"What could have happened?" demanded Sophy.

"Ah! that's just it. We must go and see."

"Well, then, Tony, just put your arm through the bars, and see if you can undo the bolt."

Tony did as the young girl suggested, but to no purpose.

"Impossible," he said, shrugging his shoulders; "there's no key in the lock; and look here, this chain that goes round these two bars is fastened by a padlock. It wants a blacksmith to break it open. But here goes."

So saying, he leant his gun against one of the pillars, and laying hold of the bars he clambered up to the top of the gate, and leant over the other side; but instead of jumping down into the park, he turned to Sophy and cried out,

"Here's a rum go. Why, there's a ladder put up against the wall close by. It's clear enough some one has used it to get out of the park, and some one who had no business there either, else John or Mary would have let them out through the gate."

The girl was going to say something, but Tony stopped her.

"Quiet, quiet," he half whispered. "Listen."

The same strange sound that had caused Ranger's howling now began again. But it was no longer possible to make any mistake as to its nature. It was the moan of a dying creature.

Sophy and the butcher-boy trembled from head to foot.

"I see something," exclaimed Tony, "right down the lime-tree avenue. It looks like some animal trying to drag itself towards us, and can't do it. Now it's up—now fallen—now up again. It's a dog. Ah! I know him; why, it's Cæsar, poor devil. I believe he's wounded, perhaps dying."

"Oh, go and see, go and see," stammered Sophy; "I'm half dead with fright. I know something dreadful's happened."

Tony lost no time in letting himself down on the other side, and then ran full speed towards the house.

Half-way up the avenue he came upon the half-lifeless body of the dog Cæsar. Mr. Robinson had bought him in

London about a year before. He was a large and powerful mastiff, well-bred, and as intelligent as he was strong. He had captured more than one village lout stealing apples, and had dragged and driven them to the steward. But now the poor animal was at his last gasp; his coat was covered with blood oozing from a dozen wounds. He had literally been hacked to pieces. The gore had partly dried on him, and gave him a most ghastly appearance.

Stretched on the short, thick grass, all covered with blood, he seemed, as we have said, almost dead. Now and then there was a convulsive movement of his paws and tail. His bloodless tongue hung out of his half-opened mouth. His eyes were closed. He had no longer strength to moan.

"What! Cæsar, my poor old Cæsar!" cried Tony; "what villain has done this to you? No wonder Ranger howled so just now; I wish I hadn't kicked him."

Hearing a friendly and familiar voice, the dying animal partly unclosed its eyes, made a last effort to raise itself up, but in vain. The poor dog fell back and expired before Tony could take it in his arms.

"Ah, it's all over with thee, poor beast," murmured the gamekeeper; "but who could believe that the world contained villains cruel enough to serve thee thus? And thy master, my poor Cæsar! Was it in defending him that thou hast come to this sad end?"

He raised himself from the ground, where he had knelt by the side of the dying animal, drew his hand across his eyes, and pursued his way to the Manor House.

All was silent as the grave. The bright rays of the sun glittered on the panes of glass, but all the shutters of the lower windows were closed.

The front entrance was approached by a short flight of steps, on each side of which were stone vases filled with scarlet geraniums in full bloom.

The young man went up to the massive door, studded with large square-headed iron nails, and turning the oval ring which served as a handle, endeavoured to gain admission, but found the door securely fastened inside.

Then he knocked with all his might, calling out loudly at the same time for John and Mary; but his voice sounded with a dull echo in the inner hall, and then a dead silence,

all the more solemn from the contrast with the previous noise.

Seized with a vague alarm he hurried round to the back of the house, where he found all equally closed, and equally silent.

But from the farmyard came a confused noise ; the cries of the animals waiting to be fed, the cows lowing to be milked, the fowls cackling in their discontent.

This inarticulate medley of sound from the brute creation seemed only to add to the feeling of awe caused by the absence of any answering human voice. It was a continued protest on their part against a neglect as unwonted as it was unexplained.

CHAPTER III.

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR.

THE gamekeeper, pale and excited, turned again to the house.

"Why, the place," he said to himself, "looks like a tomb ! What dreadful secret can there be hidden behind those thick walls and closed shutters ?"

Tony did not dare to break in, so he retraced his steps to the gate, turning his head aside as he passed the stiffening body of the unfortunate Cæsar. Instead of climbing up by the bars again, he mounted the ladder, which has been already mentioned as leaning against the wall, and then letting himself down on the other side, easily dropped into the road.

"So here you are again, Tony, at last," cried Sophy ; "and as pale as a ghost. Is there anything the matter up at the house ?"

"Matter !" he replied ; "I should think there was. Say rather a crime."

"What, what ! a crime ?" exclaimed the young girl, trembling all over ; "why, what did you see ?"

"I saw Cæsar dead, pierced through and through, poor brute, with wounds from a knife."

"How shocking! but what about John Armstrong and Mary? Oh, I do hope and trust no harm has come to them!"

"I can't tell you," he replied, "because I don't know. I can only say that the house is all shut up."

"Oh, why didn't you break open the door, or at any rate get through one of the windows?"

Tony shook his head.

"You know very well," he answered, "that that's more than I dare do. I should only get myself into trouble. But I'll be off and tell the Mayor. I mustn't lose a moment. So here goes."

"Oh, Tony, don't go yet," cried or almost screamed the girl; "whatever will become of us? Pray don't go."

"Nonsense, Sophy," he answered; "stay where you are, don't move. What you've got to do is to keep watch, and if you see any one that looks at all doubtful you keep your eye on them, so as to be able to swear to them, if need be."

"Oh, but,"—continued Sophy earnestly; "I'm so frightened."

Tony shrugged his shoulders, but replied,

"Frightened! what nonsense! What have you got to be afraid of in broad daylight and on the high-road, with this big fellow Jem, too, to take care of you? Besides, unless I'm very much mistaken, the villains who've been up to this job are miles away by this time. Keep quiet then, Sophy, do, and sit down by the road-side and wait as patiently as you can. Depend upon it, I shan't let the grass grow under my feet."

So saying he took up his gun, slung it under his arm, and whistling to Ranger, set off at a good pace to the town.

The Mayor, John Henry Jolliffe, was a tall, good-looking man, about fifty years of age, who, having made his fortune at Southampton from very small beginnings, had returned to his native place, with an income of perhaps a thousand a year, which he lived up to without being extravagant, having laid by something for his daughter, besides giving his son, who was articled to a lawyer in Winchester, a very handsome allowance.

He was perhaps a little pompous and self-asserting, and liked to feel and make other people feel that he was the

leading man in Woodville; but with all his pomposity he had a kind heart, and was by no means unpopular in the little town.

Mr. Jolliffe's house was also unquestionably the largest and best in the place, excepting of course the Manor House. It was one of those fine old Queen Anne buildings, which, without being pretentious, are pre-eminently respectable; and every brick seemed to tell the tale of a comfortable home. It stood just far enough back from the street to secure retirement, without seeming to wish for isolation. Its long and rather narrow windows retained the old-fashioned large panes, and the wood-work, painted a dead white, harmonized well with the dull red of the bricks, and was not out of keeping with the polished mahogany door, which receded about two feet from the line of wall, having on each side long panels of the same wood. A couple of fine westaria and magnolia plants covered the front of the house.

We have described it somewhat minutely because the man and his dwelling-place perfectly suited one another, and seemed, as it were, each to give and receive a mutual reflection of character.

Large double gates at the side, flanked by a couple of solid red brick piers, gave entrance to the stable-yard at the back, on which opened a door leading to the offices, and to the Mayor's business room, which communicated with the front hall by a red baize door.

Passing through a kind of postern in one of the large gates, Tony Scott saw in the yard Mr. Jolliffe's man, who was both gardener and groom, busily engaged in getting ready the hooded gig, which was also a kind of servant of all work for the Mayor's special use, Mrs. Jolliffe rejoicing in the possession of a light double brougham, for driving to Ringwood or Southampton, and making calls of ceremony.

"Hullo, Tony!" exclaimed Sam Wilkins, the above mentioned factotum; "what brings you here a-visiting at this time of the morning?"

"I want to speak with the Mayor."

"Then you *may* want, for he's just sat down to breakfast; and as soon as he's done we're off to Southampton to see our young master, Mr. Albert, who's coming to meet us on

business ; so now you know all about it, Tony, and before you can look round Biddy'll be put to, for she's all ready harnessed."

"Then," returned Tony, "you may just as well leave Biddy where she is ; for I promise you that you'll neither of you see Southampton to-day."

"Hoity toity, what's up ?" asked Sam, laughing ; "are you going to stop us ?"

"Ay, that I am," replied the gamekeeper ; "for my business with his worship is no joke."

"Well, then," said Sam, "you'd better look alive, for my orders were to harness Biddy as soon as I could, and to be ready to start at nine o'clock sharp. However, I'll give Jenny a view holloa, and you can settle your affairs with her."

So, suiting the action to the word, he made a trumpet of his hands, and called "Jenny," at the top of his voice.

The parlour-maid came running to the door, with a plate in one hand and a napkin in the other.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Sam," she cried, "to make such a noise, and to let all the neighbourhood hear you calling me ? And you," turning to Tony, "might as well have rung the bell. What is it you want ?"

"I want to see the Mayor," replied Tony, "this very minute."

"Then that's exactly what you won't do, Mr. Gamekeeper," retorted Jenny ; "for his worship hasn't long sat down to his breakfast, and he isn't one that likes to be disturbed ; so just you wait quietly for ten minutes or so."

"That's exactly what I'm not going to do, Jenny, and if you don't let me see the Mayor at once, you'll find yourself out of your reckoning, I can tell you."

"Why, what on earth's the matter ?" she asked ; "has a fire broken out somewhere ?"

"A fire !" he answered disdainfully ; "ten times worse than that. Come, I can't be kept waiting any longer."

"Oh well," she replied, struck by the earnestness of his manner ; "come in, and I'll let his worship know you're here."

So she showed him into the Mayor's business room, an apartment plainly but well furnished, having a large table in

the middle, covered with a mass of papers, mostly official, lying in some confusion, not docketed and tied with red tape as they would have been in a lawyer's office.

Tony Scott was only kept waiting a minute or so, when Mr. Jolliffe bustled in with his napkin in his hand, and almost bringing with him an odour from his well-furnished breakfast-table.

"Now, Mr. Gamekeeper," he said good-naturedly, "what do you mean by frightening Jenny out of her wits, and hardly giving me time to finish my first cup of coffee? What is it? What is it?" he continued; "have you caught a poacher red-handed, or come upon some snares set in the woods? Come, out with it, man; you look as if you'd seen a ghost!"

"I think it my duty," replied the gamekeeper, "to let your worship know that I've every reason to believe that a crime has been committed in this parish."

CHAPTER IV.

"FIDUS ACHATES."

AT these words Mr. Jolliffe's usually florid face became suddenly pale. "What?" he asked nervously; "did you say a crime, and in this parish?"

"Yes, your worship," replied the gamekeeper.

"Well, but what crime? Some robbery, I suppose?"

"A murder, sir!"

"Good God," stammered the Mayor.

"Yes, sir," continued Tony; "and perhaps two."

"Mercy on us! And when did this take place?"

"This last night."

"And where?"

"At the Manor House."

"Is not Mr. Robinson away?"

"Yes, sir, I believe Mr. Robinson is away, but John Armstrong and his daughter Mary are always there."

"What, and have those poor creatures been killed?"

"I am very much afraid so, sir. Everything looks like it."

"Oh, then," exclaimed Mr. Jolliffe, with an air of relief, "you are not quite sure?"

"Well, sir," replied the gamekeeper, "I can't take upon myself to say that I'm actually certain sure, but at the same time I haven't much doubt about it."

"But what reason could there be for the commission of such a crime? what object?"

"Ah, your worship, that's just what I don't know; but I felt that it was nothing but my duty to let you know what I've seen with my own eyes."

He then proceeded to give a short but exact account of all that we have already laid before our readers. As he continued his narrative, poor Mr. Jolliffe's agitation increased more and more, till drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, which he wiped off nervously with his napkin.

"What does your worship think of the matter?" asked Tony, when he had come to the end of his tale.

"Well," answered Mr. Jolliffe, in a slow and unsteady voice, "I can't help fearing—yes—I am really afraid that there may be something in what you've been telling me. It looks very serious—it does indeed. A murder, ah, perhaps a double murder in this parish—such a quiet parish too as it always has been. What on earth shall we come to if they begin murdering in Woodville? There will be no such thing as safety anywhere. Here, Jenny, Jenny!"

The rosy-faced parlour-maid was not very far off; indeed, it might be safely conjectured that her ear and the keyhole had not been a hundred miles from each other, but she opened the door with an innocent air, saying, "I've kept the coffee-pot on the hot plate, sir; shall I take it in now?"

"Go along with your coffee," cried Mr. Jolliffe impatiently; "tell Sam to run as fast as he can to Mr. Bosworth, and ask him to be so kind as to come here directly—directly mind, *directly*—and then tell the superintendent of police I want him; and then,—no," turning to Anthony, "it will save time if you will go and fetch Charles Bowren, the locksmith, and we can all go to the Manor House together. This is in the interest of justice; so lose no time—lose no time whatever."

"You may depend on me, sir," said Jenny; "though I

should like to know what's the matter. And shall I tell Sam to unharness Biddy, when he comes back?"

"No, certainly not," replied the Mayor; "keep her all ready for starting. It may be necessary to send over to Romsey, and perhaps even to Southampton, and Biddy's the mare to get quickly over the ground. I'll back her against any other within ten miles," said the poor man, forgetting for the moment, in the pride of ownership, that the occasion was scarcely a suitable one for descanting on the merits of his quadruped.

Jenny was already off. She had no sooner despatched Sam on his errand than she started a little news agency of her own, and it soon became known that something dreadful had happened at the Manor House, and that the Mayor, and Mr. Bosworth the lawyer, with several police constables, were just going to start for the scene of the supposed crime.

News like this, coming too from head-quarters, soon spread; and when Mr. Jolliffe appeared at the door after a few minutes (which he had spent in making his wife and daughter even more nervous than himself), he found an excited crowd waiting for him, whose respectful salutations he acknowledged in an absent manner, till, seeing his friend Mr. Bosworth in the distance, he made his way through the crowd to meet him. Then, seizing his hand, he exclaimed, "Oh, this dreadful affair! What *do* you think of it?"

"You must remember, my dear sir," returned the lawyer, "that I know nothing of it beyond having heard from your servant that there was something wrong up at the Manor House."

The Mayor related as concisely as he could what he had heard from Tony Scott.

"It certainly has an ill look," said the lawyer; "but we must not always judge by appearances, as they are sometimes misleading."

"I trust they may be so in this case," replied Mr. Jolliffe; "but I hardly dare hope it."

At this moment the superintendent of police came up, and having saluted the Mayor, said,

"I am at your orders, sir; and as I heard some rumours of a crime having been committed, I thought there

would be no harm in bringing a couple of my men in case they might be wanted."

"A very good precaution, Mr. Superintendent; and as I see Charles Bowren coming, we'll lose no time in making our way to the Manor House."

A very few minutes brought them to the entrance gates, where they found Sophy and the butcher-lad keeping guard.

"Have you seen anything or anybody since I left you?" asked Tony, in a low voice.

"Only about half a dozen people on the road," replied Sophy; "but they were neighbours, who said 'good-day' and passed on."

The next thing to be done was to open the gate, and this was soon done by the blacksmith breaking a link of the chain which secured the bars, and then picking the large lock; so that there was nothing to prevent their passing in. The crowd, which now numbered about a hundred persons, pressed forward for admission, but were at once stopped by the Mayor, who informed them that no one would be allowed to enter except the officials, Tony Scott, and the blacksmith; also that one of the police would remain there to carry out his orders. On this there was a general disappointment and some discontent, but no one for a moment thought of disobeying the Mayor's injunctions. Only one voice was raised, and that was Sophy's.

"Oh, please, sir," she said, making a profound curtesy, "let Jem and me go in; because you see, sir, we've got the right to go."

"Right!" repeated Mr. Jolliffe; "why, what right can you have?"

"Oh, sir, please, sir," persisted Sophy, "we're witnesses like."

"Witnesses of what?" asked the Mayor.

"Why, sir, you see that Mary Armstrong sent little Alice yesterday evening to father's to order some fish, and here they are, then to Tony Scott's to tell him to get some game, and see, I've been minding his bag, and Jem's been waiting with the meat; and please, sir, we do want to know that no harm has happened to poor Mary."

"Well, well," said the good-natured Mayor, "you may come."

So the little party of eight passed up the lime-walk, followed by the envious glances of those outside the gate, who pressed forward to see as much as they could through the bars. We must not forget to include Ranger among those who were admitted, but he did not seem to appreciate the distinction, for he followed close upon his master's heels, with his head hanging down, and his tail between his legs. All at once he set up a dismal howl, and would not move a step further.

"Ah!" said Tony, "here's poor Cæsar. Look at him, Mr. Mayor, isn't it cruel? he has had stabs enough to kill him ten times over."

"Poor beast," said Mr. Jolliffe, stopping before the dead animal. "The very last time I was here, I offered John Armstrong ten guineas for that dog; but he told me Mr. Robinson wouldn't take fifty for him; and this is what he's come to."

The lawyer, who had been very thoughtful, now spoke for the first time since they had entered the park. "It is of importance," he said, "to find out whether the animal was killed on the spot where he lies, or whether he was wounded at some distance, and then dragged himself here."

"That's soon found out," remarked Tony, moving on and following the track like an Indian. After about twenty yards he stopped and said to his companions, "See, the grass is all stained with blood so far, and here it is that the dog had his struggle with them as killed him."

It was plain enough that for a space of five or six feet round the ground was trodden down, and then scratched up by the dog's claws in his agony. A swarm of large flies were buzzing round a pool of congealed blood which lay in the middle.

"And then, you see," continued Tony, "when the poor animal heard me ringing, though he was three parts dead, he managed to drag himself so far to meet me."

"I should like to see," said the lawyer, "if there is any mark of boots on the ground—any distinct impression. You're a sportsman, Tony, and ought to have good eyes. See what trace you can find."

The gamekeeper threw himself on the ground, but after examining it carefully on every side, raised himself, saying,

"No, impossible to find anything ; it hasn't rained for ever so long, and the ground is as hard as a brick, and the dew has fallen since those miscreants were here."

"Well, then," said the lawyer, "let us go on, as it is of no use for us to waste our time here."

As they are nearing the house, we will take the opportunity of giving some account of Mr. Bosworth, whom we have already introduced by name to our readers.

He was an elderly man, between fifty and sixty, tall, thin, with short iron-grey hair ; his face had a keen but not harsh look, and his general appearance, though not specially remarkable, left an impression of considerable intelligence, and of a certain strength of will, tempered by kindly forbearance, in its expression. He had been articled to a solicitor at Winchester, but had lived the greater part of his life at Woodville, and had a very good connection in the neighbourhood, but the breaking of a Bank with which he was connected had greatly diminished his fortune. He was, however, universally respected, and as Clerk to the Magistrates in Quarter Sessions, he carried great weight on all legal points, and was indispensable to our friend the Mayor of Woodville.

CHAPTER V.

MURDER MOST FOUL.

THE little party, having now reached the principal entrance of the Manor House, ascended the short flight of steps, and after knocking vainly at the door, with no better result than when Tony Scott had done so an hour before, Charles Bowren was desired to pick the lock. "No easy matter," he replied, "if, as I expect, it is double locked." So it proved to be ; and it was nearly a quarter of an hour before he succeeded in opening it. Though he made but little noise in his work, and the echoes inside were therefore only faintly heard, this half silence seemed to tell of some terrible secret

within; and when the door swung back on its hinges, there was a momentary hesitation on the part of those present, as if they found themselves on the threshold of a mystery, the depth of which they could only guess at. Accordingly, and as it were naturally, they spoke with bated breath, and walked quietly into the large entrance hall. One of them threw open the shutters, and a blaze of sunlight entered. Everything was in perfect order. Round the walls were hung some old portraits, several antlers of deer, and some pieces of ancient armour. When Mr. Robinson purchased the house, he bought with it at the same time most of the old furniture, which had been there for many years, in possession of the family now extinct, and, in consequence, there was an absence of any modern upholstery, which would have harmonized badly with the outer appearance of the house.

There was an unspoken feeling that Mr. Jolliffe, by virtue of his official and social position, should take the lead. He responded by saying,

"I have not been very often in the house since Mr. Robinson bought it, but, unless I am mistaken, the door immediately on the right opens into the library, the one beyond it into the drawing-room, the one opposite to us into the dining-room, while that on the left leads to the kitchen and other offices; but who knows which are the rooms occupied by John and Mary Armstrong?"

"Oh, I do," replied Sophy; "I've often been there, but (in a lower tone of voice) I'd rather not go first, I feel frightened."

"Well, then," said the gamekeeper, coming to the front, "let me lead the way; it's time enough to be frightened when we see anything to be frightened at, though I must own I don't like this queer silence."

Accordingly, they crossed the large hall, which was paved with squares of black and white marble, like a chess-board, and opening the door on the left entered the kitchen. It was a noble room, and a dinner might have been cooked in it for all the parish. Facing the door was an immense chimney, with an open stove large enough to have roasted a sheep whole, but it had evidently not been used lately. Close by was a range, of more modern construction, in

which were the ashes of yesterday's fire, while over the hot plates, which filled up the spaces on each side of the fire-place, were ranged in regular order a whole "battery" of copper pots and pans, beautifully polished, while the shelves at the side contained such an array of kettles, stew-pans, frying-pans, gridirons, moulds and shapes, as to suggest visions of an army of cooks and scullions enough to drive a hungry man almost out of his mind at the thought of the boiling and baking, the roasting and stewing, that must take place at times.

These objects, however, only gained a passing glance from the Mayor and his companions, for their attention was immediately drawn to the large, long, central table on which were placed some silver dishes, containing the remains of a fowl, a succulent York ham, and a *pâté de foies gras*, all of which showed signs of having lately appeased the appetite of some hungry guest. The plates which had been used, together with the knives, forks, and glasses, were all placed ready to be washed up in the morning, without the slightest mark of haste or disarrangement.

"It is quite clear," said Mr. Bosworth, "that some one was here last night of more than ordinary consequence."

"Why do you think so?" asked the Mayor.

"Because," replied Mr. Bosworth, "John Armstrong and his daughter were certainly not accustomed to make use of silver dishes for their ordinary supper; and besides, the food is not such as they would generally provide for themselves."

"That is very probable," remarked Mr. Jolliffe; "and I am inclined to agree with you."

"Besides," continued the lawyer, "Sophy, Jem, and the gamekeeper have all told us that they received orders to bring provisions for the entertainment of some one who was expected. But this *some one* seems to have arrived sooner than they thought, and accordingly, an impromptu supper was prepared from what there was in the house ready for such an emergency. The state of the dishes shows that this *some one* was a hungry traveller, who fully appreciated the good fare put before him. Now the question is who was this *some one*, and this is the first thing for us to find out. Let us be moving on."

Accordingly, they passed through another door leading

into the servants' hall, then on into the linen room, lined with cupboards, through the glass doors of which could be seen everything necessary for a large establishment: piles of snow-white linen, sheets, towels, table-cloths, napkins, all arranged with the most perfect regularity.

The sight of all this order revived the drooping spirits of the Mayor, and he exclaimed,

"What! a murder in a house in such a condition as this; utterly impossible. There is not a single thing out of its place. Oh, no! it is very clear that for some reason, which we shall learn later on, John Armstrong and his daughter went out late last night and have not yet returned."

"I should think so, or rather hope so," replied the lawyer, "if the dog had not been killed; but the murder of the animal troubles me, as I cannot understand it."

"Oh, that will be all explained by-and-by."

"Now," said Tony Scott, taking hold of the handle of a door at the end of the linen room, "we are coming to the passage between John Armstrong's room and Mary's, and in a half a minute we shall know all about it."

He opened the door and crossed the threshold, but had scarcely advanced into the half-lit passage when he drew back, as if shot, uttering an inarticulate shriek of horror, which made the flesh creep of every one who heard it.

"What is it? oh, what is it?" they all exclaimed, pressing forward to see, and yet at the same time hanging back from an indescribable but most certain dread of what would meet their eyes.

But the young man, who still stood in the doorway, under the influence of excitement caused by long tension of the nerves on one unaccustomed to any self-control, completely lost all command over himself, and shrieked again and again, but this time in most articulate and thrilling tones, "MURDER! MURDER!! MURDER!!!" The effect of these cries, resounding through the large rooms, was most unearthly, as his vigorous organization made every echo in the house ring again. The superintendent of police, as being most accustomed to such scenes, after the first moment of natural recoil, came forward, and taking the young man by the arm endeavoured to calm him, while the constable hastened back into the kitchen for some water, which they all seemed to need.

When they were able to advance one by one, the two youngest of the party hanging timidly back, the sight that met their eyes was most terrible ; and, strong men as they were, they shrank back appalled. For there, on the floor, in the middle of the passage, lay poor Mary Armstrong, stretched upon her back, with her arms crossed on her breast, and all round her a pool of congealed blood. This unhappy victim of a mysterious murder was a fine, well-formed girl, some twenty years of age, evidently cut off when in full possession of health and strength.

No doubt the sound of some sudden noise had wakened her in the middle of the night, and rising hastily from her bed she had hurried into the passage, where a cruel death awaited her. Alarmed perhaps for her father, the poor child had only just time to throw a shawl round her, and to rush out of her room. The stroke of a knife, only one, but such a terrible one, had crossed her throat, and left an awful gash. Her long brown hair unloosed, either in her sleep or by her fall, partly covered her beautiful white bosom, and lovely arms bare to the shoulders. Oh, poor girl, poor girl ; what a pitiful sight ! To write, or to read of it, is heartrending. What must it have been to look on it ?

Her pale face seemed like a waxen mask standing out in relief from the crimson stream which surrounded it. The mouth was firmly closed in agony. The fearful grinding of her poor teeth in the death-struggle was a thing to be imagined. The dark eyes, half-closed, stared into empty space with horror and despair. The lovely features, now motionless for ever, still kept as it were a petrified look of unutterable dread. Poor girl, poor girl !

CHAPTER VI.

“LET US MEET AND QUESTION THIS MOST BLOODY PIECE
OF WORK.”

“Ah,” groaned Mr. Jolliffe, who had turned as pale as death, “what an awful sight !” And he hid his face in his hands.

Sophy broke out sobbing, "Oh, Mary, my poor Mary! Such a kind girl, such a good girl, and I loved her so."

Tony, slowly recovering from his paroxysm, clenched his hands nervously, as much as to say that if he could get within reach of the murderer, no judge or jury would be necessary to decide his fate. The two policemen and the locksmith could scarcely restrain their emotion, and young Jem was not ashamed to let the tears run down his cheeks. The lawyer, although greatly moved, was the most composed of the group.

"I much fear," he said at last, "that unhappily we are not yet at the close of our painful task. There is too much reason to dread that a second crime has been committed. The wretch who murdered the poor girl in this cowardly manner doubtless did not spare her father. Which is John Armstrong's room?"

"That one," said Tony, pointing to a large door on the other side of the passage, but he did not offer to enter it.

"Had we not better take up the body of this poor child?" said the Mayor.

"By no means," replied Mr. Bosworth; "wait until we have seen all, and are able to give complete evidence on every point. Now let us proceed."

The superintendent of police came forward, and cautiously opened the door pointed out. It was very nearly dark inside, as the light only came through the chinks of the shutters. Making his way to the window he stopped suddenly, and cried to the lawyer, "Good God, sir, you are right; here is the body of poor John Armstrong."

"Mercy on us!" groaned the Mayor; "why, this is nothing else than a slaughter-house. And in Woodville too. God help us!"

The superintendent now opened one of the windows, and the sight presented was sickening. The poor old sailor, with nothing on but his shirt, lay near the door, quite dead. He had not been killed, like his daughter, by a knife, but by the blow of a hatchet. The deadly weapon had been wielded with such force that his head had been cleft down to his shoulders. The brains and congealed blood made a frightful mask that hardly left the head with the appearance of belonging to a human being.

There was no lack of defensive weapons in the room. Two guns, presumeably loaded, hung over the mantelpiece, and a revolver lay on a table by the side of the bed. It was quite evident that the unfortunate man had been roused by some familiar voice, and struck down without a moment's warning as he opened the door.

"But," asked the lawyer, "what was the object of this murder—this butchery I might say?"

He answered himself in looking round the room. It was lined with old-fashioned oak cupboards, panelled, and surmounted with carved wreaths of leaves and flowers. Besides the ordinary furniture of a bedroom, were two large wooden chests placed against the wall. These, as well as the cupboards, had been chopped open by blows of an axe, the murderer evidently not caring to look for the keys, and feeling perfectly secure that the isolation of the house would prevent any noise from being heard. The contents of the cupboards and chests had been tossed out roughly into the room, and lay there in the utmost confusion. Linen, clothes, books and papers, heaped recklessly together, gave unmistakeable proof of a search after something. But what was it?

"Did you ever hear," asked the lawyer of Mr. Jolliffe, "that this poor fellow had usually, or even occasionally, any large sums of money belonging to Mr. Robinson?"

The Mayor shook his head. "No," he replied, "nor was it likely. There were no rents paid in, and all bills for repairs, and so forth, were settled by Mr. Robinson himself when he came down; and I never heard that poor Armstrong was supposed to have any means of his own."

"I can't see my way at all," said Mr. Bosworth. "It is quite clear that the murderer must have had something in view beyond the few pounds presumeably in the house. You see, he did not trouble himself to take away the silver dishes on the kitchen table. What could he have been after? How could he have made his way, in the middle of the night, into a house securely fastened and guarded? Did he kill the dog coming in, or going out? Had he accomplices concealed in the house? How did he open this door behind which John Armstrong was safe, and able

to defend himself? The revolver lies there untouched. These are difficult questions to answer. The best thing we can do is to telegraph at once to Scotland Yard, and to let the coroner know. If you, Mr. Jolliffe, will write out the telegram, the superintendent can send it off, and, at the same time, make every inquiry to see what light can be thrown upon the mystery, and to learn if any suspicious characters have been seen about the neighbourhood."

"Let us come away, then, from this awful sight," said the Mayor; "and do you, my friend, write the telegram, for I am too much upset to do so. I have with me official paper, and writing materials."

They accordingly returned into the laundry, closing the passage door, and then the lawyer, who had kept his presence of mind, wrote out the telegram for London, begging the authorities immediately to send down an experienced detective; wrote a requisition to the coroner to hold an inquest as soon as possible; directed the superintendent to see that all arrangements were made for summoning the jury on the coroner's order, and sent to the doctor at Woodville requesting his instant attendance. All this was done in the name of the Mayor, as acting magistrate, who had only to sign each requisition; and indeed for the time he was so thoroughly unnerved that this was nearly all he was capable of doing.

The next thing was to await the arrival of the doctor, and any witnesses who might be forthcoming.

The superintendent took charge of the various papers, and gave full instructions to the constable in attendance to lose no time in despatching them, and then took upon himself to endeavour to find from among the crowd which had been gathering at the gates, some one who could give evidence of what had been seen or heard during the past eventful night.

Mr. Jolliffe took advantage of the interval to endeavour to compose himself and arrange his thoughts, for all that had passed as yet seemed to him like some terrible dream which he could scarcely realize.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE WITNESSES.

IN about a quarter of an hour the superintendent returned. "What! alone?" asked Mr. Bosworth, with an air of disappointment.

"Oh no, sir," was the reply; "I have three witnesses who know, or say they know, something."

"And who are they?"

"Little Alice Holland; a working man of the name of Saunders, who lives in Woodville, whom we all know very well; and Andrew Mathieson, bailiff at Lingfield."

"Where are they?"

"They are waiting in the kitchen, as I thought it best they should come in separately, so as to give their evidence independently of each other."

"Quite right, Mr. Superintendent," said the Mayor; "now let us have in the first."

This was Alice Holland, a child of fifteen, who did not seem more than twelve or thirteen, poorly though neatly dressed, plain rather than pretty, but with an air of intelligence that lit up her face and shone in her dark eyes, which were now red and swollen from crying, and she was crying still. However, she did not seem at all timid or frightened, when she found herself in the presence of the Mayor.

"Alice, my child," said Mr. Jolliffe, "what are you crying for?"

"Oh, sir," she stammered out, "I can't help it. They say that Mary Armstrong has been murdered. Oh, Mary, my dear, dear Mary!" and the little girl's sobs broke out so violently as almost to choke her. The Mayor waited till this outburst of sorrow had had its course, and then said soothingly, "What, were you so fond of her?"

"Fond of her?" was the answer; "oh! I loved her with all my heart, and her father too. They were so good, both of them. There was never any one like them. I wasn't strong when I first came here, and I ain't nothing to boast

of now, but just out of kindness they never found no fault with my work, and never wanted me to do more than I could; and all along of my poor old grandmother. Any one else would have said they'd took me out of charity, and talked of it all over the place, but they never said nothing, and was as kind as kind. And now they've been and killed them, and I shall never see them no more; and what will become of granny and me?"

The poor child hid her face in her hands, and burst out again into a passion of sobs. Mr. Jolliffe tried to soothe her.

"It is very natural, my dear, that you should feel as you do. I will see to your poor old grandmother, and take care that she does not want."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, sir, a thousand times," she broke out between her sobs; "but that won't give me John and Mary Armstrong."

"No, my good girl," said Mr. Bosworth; "unhappily the murderer struck with too sure an aim. But now," he continued, "attend to me, for I want your help."

"My help, sir?" she replied, turning her dark eyes full on him; "what can I do?"

"You must tell us all that you know."

"So I will, sir; but indeed I don't know who killed them. I only wish I did—the murdering wretch."

"No, Alice," said the lawyer, "we don't expect you do, but still you know something, for you said so to the superintendent, else he would not have brought you in here."

"Yes, sir," replied Alice, "I certainly did say so."

"And wasn't it true? you know how wrong it is to tell lies," said Mr. Bosworth severely.

"Oh, it wasn't a lie, sir, only—" The little girl hesitated.

"Only what?" asked Mr. Bosworth. "Don't be afraid; go on."

"Only," she continued, hesitating, "perhaps it's not of much consequence."

"That," said the lawyer, "we can decide better than you can. Now speak out fully and freely. Perhaps what seems to you of no consequence at all, may lead to most important results. What was it, then, that you had in your mind when you told the superintendent that you had something to disclose; of whom or of what were you thinking?"

"Well, sir," she answered, "to tell you the truth, I was thinking of Bazi Bazoum."

"Bazi Bazoum!" exclaimed the Mayor and the lawyer in one breath; "what on earth do you mean?"

The superintendent now came forward and said, "I think, gentlemen, I can enlighten you. This Bazi Bazoum, or the Highlander—for I don't know his real name—belongs to a troupe of acrobats, jugglers and mountebanks, who were here for a couple of days, and performed in a large tent in a field outside the town."

"Quite true," interposed Mr. Jolliffe; "I gave them permission to do so, as I found that they were respectable people."

"Well, gentlemen," continued the superintendent, "yesterday morning they packed up their traps into a large waggon, and, with two more houses on wheels, went off to Dedworth, where I suppose they will stop for a day or two. This Bazi Bazoum isn't one of those fellows who bring yards of riband out their mouth, or eat boiling tar, or swallow swords; but, if you please, he has two voices—one like anybody else's, the other, quite a different one, comes from where he pleases, sometimes from the roof of the house, sometimes from underground, sometimes down the chimney! You never heard the like of it."

"Oh," said the Mayor, "he is a ventriloquist."

"Yes, sir, that's what he's called, and sometimes they call him 'the man with the doll,' for if you'll believe me he carries in his pocket a doll, dressed like a woman, and he takes it out, and makes it speak in such a natural way, answering his questions and so on, that you can scarcely believe your ears."

"And do you know anything about this Bazi Bazoum, as you call him?" asked Mr. Bosworth.

"No, sir," was the reply; "I never heard of him in my life till he came here the other day."

"Now, Alice," said the Mayor, addressing the little girl, "tell me, what has this ventriloquist to do with the murder of John and Mary Armstrong?"

"Nothing, sir," she answered, "except that Mary and Bazi Bazoum had been acquainted with one another for ever so long."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Jolliffe, "why, that's ridiculous; it is not possible."

"All the same, sir," persisted the girl, "it's quite true."

"But how? who told you so?"

Here the lawyer interposed. "My dear Mr. Jolliffe," he said, "I am afraid you will confuse the child. Don't you think it would be better to let her go on in her own way, then we can form our own conclusions afterwards. So now, little girl, tell us all you've heard, or rather all you know."

Alice stood thinking for a minute or two, then raised her head, and began thus:

"Last Monday evening—Monday in this week, you know—after I had done my work here and was going home, I heard the sound of a drum and of a trumpet, and shouting, and I could see lights flaring in the field outside the town, so I ran as quick as I could to see what it was all about; and I found people, oh, such a crowd, and a show place, with pictures in front, and a man dressed up all in colours and ribands, and he kept on blowing a trumpet and beating a drum, and calling the people to come up and see all the wonderful things inside, and the people kept coming more and more, and ever so many went in, and I did so long to go too; but you had to pay fourpence a-piece, and children half-price, but I hadn't got no twopence, so after I'd stood and looked ever so long, I ran home to grandmother, and went to bed, and cried to myself because I couldn't see the show; and in bed I could hear the trumpet and the drum, and I fancied I could hear the man outside (it was only my fancy, you know) calling out till he was hoarse, 'Now then, good people, walk up, walk up, plenty of room, walk up!' and wasn't I just vexed."

Mr. Jolliffe was on the point of interrupting the girl's tale, as he found it needlessly long, but the lawyer made an imperative sign to him to restrain himself. The Mayor, accustomed to the control of his mentor, said nothing, and Alice continued:

"The next morning, everybody, who had been into the show the evening before, said, oh, it was beautiful, wonderful, it was worth going all the way to Romsey or even to Southampton to see the like of it; and they kept on talking about it, and saying they wouldn't have missed it for any-

thing; and this made me all the more vexed to think I couldn't see it; and so when I came here to work Mary saw I looked out of sorts, and she said, 'Why, little Alice, what's the matter? has anything gone wrong?' I always felt at home with Mary, so I up and told her all about it, and she began to laugh, but said ne'er a word to me. You may guess how pleased I was in the evening when she began, 'Now, little one, run home as quick as you can, and put on your Sunday things, and wait for me outside the town, and then we'll go and see the show. Father's given me leave.' I didn't want telling twice, but I jumped for joy and kissed her; then I ran all the way home, without stopping once, and you may be sure I wasn't long changing my things; but I'd hardly got to the field when Mary came, looking so nice in a pink dress and a little black lace shawl, and such a lovely bonnet, and she paid sixpence to go in, fourpence for herself and twopence for me, and when I found myself sitting by her side in the front row on a bench all covered with red cloth, oh, wasn't I just pleased, it seemed quite heavenly."

Here the girl stopped for a moment to take breath, and in her excitement appeared almost to fancy herself there again. The Mayor, quite out of patience, broke out once more, "What foolish nonsense all this is! What is the good of listening to the child's idle words?"

But the lawyer, on the contrary, lifting up his hand to restrain his colleague's impatience, gave his full attention to what the girl was saying.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE FAIR.

ALICE continued: "I kept on looking all round, and listening to the music, and wasn't it lovely, and didn't they just do wonderful things; it was for all the world like magic, and then all at once the music struck up twice as loud, and

everybody all round us began to say, 'Ah, Bazi Bazoum's coming; now you *will* hear something to make you laugh!' So I looked and looked, and presently from a side door a man came on the stage dressed just like a Highland soldier—I've seen them, you know, at Southampton, with a short petticoat instead of trousers, and in front a sort of bag made of skin, like a pouch—and in his hand he had a doll beautifully dressed in a silk gown like Miss Maude, Mr. Robinson's niece. Well, all at once Mary gave a great start, like somebody very much surprised. We were sitting quite close to one another, and I could feel her elbow press against me, so I asked her what was the matter, for she looked as white as a sheet, and I was afraid she was ill or faint, but she put down her head, and said to me hastily, 'Nothing, child, nothing, don't bother.' I felt rather vexed, but all at once Bazi Bazoum called out, 'Attention,' so I couldn't think of anything but him. He spoke to his doll, did Bazi Bazoum, and she answered him in such a queer little squeaky voice. Then he got angry and so did she, and they had a dreadful quarrel. I can't just tell you all the rights of it, but they did carry on above a bit, both of them; and the people shouted with laughing, and the more they laughed the more she scolded him, and the more angry he got with her, till all at once he happened to look our way (we wasn't to say right in the middle, rather to the side like), and then he gave a start, just as Mary had done, and he stared at her with his mouth open, as if he was struck all of a heap, and he seemed to forget where he was, and he let the doll fall out of his hand all of a sudden, and she fell '*flop*' on the stage. The people didn't like this, and began to cry out, but Bazi Bazoum never gave no heed to them, but kept on looking at Mary as hard as ever he could look, though she turned her head away. At last the noise got so loud that the manager of the show came forward and picked up the doll and gave it to Bazi Bazoum, and whispered something to him at the same time which seemed to wake him up like, and then he went on again; but somehow it wasn't the same exactly, he seemed as if he was thinking of something else and didn't rightly know what he was doing or saying of, and then as soon as he could he made a bow, and went out at the side door. Then there came on a dog, oh, and he *was*

clever, and then a canary bird, who climbed up a ladder, and picked out cards, and fired off a gun, and then I don't know what there was to see after that, for Mary got up all in a hurry and said, 'Come along,' and then she took my hand, and made me follow her, though I can tell you I didn't want to leave, as I could have stayed there all night. When we got outside, oh, it was as dark as dark. There wasn't a creature about. I asked Mary whether I should see her home; she said, 'Yes, as far as the gates.' We went on together pretty quick, without saying a word, when all at once she whispered, 'There's some one behind following us, let's run,' and so we did, as hard as we could, but it wasn't a bit of good, for whoever it was following us ran faster than we did. He soon caught us up, and then a very low and pleasant voice said, 'Mary, dear Mary, do please stop; I must speak to you, I really must.' She answered, 'I have nothing to say to you,' and yet all the same she stopped. Though it was quite dark, by degrees I got used to it, and could see a little, so I turned round and looked at the man. I thought I knew the voice, and sure enough I was right, it was Bazi Bazoum."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Jolliffe, "a mountebank, a regular vagabond, to be Mary's friend, and she one of the steadiest and best conducted girls in the parish; upon my word it's monstrous!"

"My dear sir," observed the lawyer, "I don't see as yet anything to compromise the good name of this poor murdered girl. So far as we know this ventriloquist may be a good sort of fellow, and Mary, you see, instead of encouraging him tried to run away from him. We must be careful not to form hasty judgments. Go on, Alice."

"Well then," continued Alice, "Mary and Bazi Bazoum kept on chattering together for ever so long. I was a little way in front of them, and couldn't hear every word, but I could make out pretty well what they were saying."

"And what was it all about?" asked Mr. Jolliffe anxiously.

"Why, first, Mary began by finding fault with him for taking up such a wretched sort of business, but he spoke up for himself, and said that as he could not find her when he came home, he didn't seem to care what he did, so long

as he could get an honest living, and this job did as well as any other for the time. Then he went on to say that he loved her with all his heart, and that he wanted to marry her, and must speak to her father, and so on. Then Mary said he should do nothing of the kind, for that her father would only refuse him, and most likely turn him out of the house. He begged and prayed, but it was of no use, and at last Mary laid hold of my arm, and said rather sharply to Bazi Bazoum, 'Take my advice and go back where you came from, and don't follow me, for I won't have it!' Then she dragged me on so quickly that I could scarcely follow her. The young man didn't dare to answer her, but I could hear the sound of his feet after us for a while. Mary had the key of the great gate; she opened it, kissed me, went in, and locked it after her. I ran back home as fast as I could, for I was afraid Bazi Bazoum might wait for me on the road and want to speak to me, but I saw no more of him."

"What else?" asked the lawyer.

"Nothing else."

"But I suppose," he continued, "that Mary said something to you about it the next day?"

"She only asked me not to say nothing to her father, and in course I didn't, though, to tell the truth, I hadn't no chance."

"And do you suppose that Bazi Bazoum, as you call him, *did* see anything more of Mary?"

"I can't suppose, sir," replied Alice, "because I don't know."

"Have you anything more to tell us, my child?" inquired Mr. Jolliffe.

"Well, sir," she replied, "if your worship, or Mr. Bosworth likes to ask me anything more, I'll tell you so far as I can."

"We should like to know whether any company was expected at the Manor House. Were not some preparations being made? Were not Mr. Robinson and his niece to have come to-day?"

"I can't say rightly," answered Alice; "but on Tuesday Mary said to me, 'Father's got to go to Southampton to-morrow on business, and won't be home till late; so we'll have all day to ourselves, little one' (that's what she always

called me). Sure enough I came the first thing in the morning—that's yesterday, you know—and about eight, or a little after, the postman came with a letter for John Armstrong, but he'd been gone ever so long. Mary looked at the address and said, 'I know by the writing that's from Mr. Robinson; I wonder what it's about!' and she laid it on the table."

"What, without reading it?" asked the Mayor.

"Surely, sir," replied Alice, "seeing as how it were for her father. Well, he came back, John Armstrong did, about eight o'clock in the evening. I'd stopped to keep Mary company; she gave him the letter, directly minute as he came in. When he'd read it he called out, 'Good gracious, Mary, what shall we do? We must get in victuals for to-morrow; game, fish, butcher's meat—the best of everything.' 'Well then,' said Mary, 'I'll write a note. Little Alice will pass Tony Scott's house, and the butcher's, and Sophy's father's cottage, and so we shall have everything in good time in the morning.' So she wrote it all down and read it out loud to me, because you know I can't read writing—not to say well—but I've a good memory, and what comes in at one ear doesn't go out at the other. So then I went to the town, ordered everything, and as it was too late to come back here, I went home to bed. Oh, if any one had only told me then, 'You'll never see Mary Armstrong alive again, nor her father neither,' I wouldn't have believed it; no, not for a moment, and yet it would have been true. Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do?" and the poor child's sobs broke out with renewed force, from having been kept back.

After waiting a minute or two, Mr. Bosworth said,

"Now just think carefully, and tell me *exactly* the time you left Mary and her father yesterday evening."

"Well, sir," stammered the child, "it might have been a quarter-past eight when I went out of the house, but the half-hour hadn't gone."

"And then there was no one in the place but those two?"

"No, sir; nobody whatever. I'm sure, certain sure, because Mary and I we went through the house, shutting the shutters as soon as it got dark."

"It's strange," said the lawyer to himself, "*very* strange. However, I've a last question to ask. When you left the Manor House to return to Woodville, did you meet any one on the road?"

"Yes, sir," replied Alice; "I met two men together."

"Did you know them?"

"I can't say, sir, it was quite dark. They were speaking, but I could not hear what they said as I ran by them. And, oh, please, sir, I forgot to say John Armstrong himself came to the gate to let me out, and I heard him lock it behind me."

"That will do," said Mr. Bosworth; "you can go now, Alice."

"And, Mr. Superintendent," added Mr. Jolliffe, "take the child into the kitchen, and give her something to eat. Then bring in your next witness."

CHAPTER IX.

BY THE PARK GATE.

EDWARD SAUNDERS was an elderly man, decent looking, but without anything in his appearance needing a special description. He was a jobbing gardener, had lived in Woodville all his life, and had brought up a large family respectably. He made a profound bow to the Mayor and Mr. Bosworth, and seemed as if he wished himself somewhere else.

"Good-morning, Master Saunders, good-morning, and what have you got to tell us?" inquired Mr. Jolliffe.

"Oh, about this murder, your worship, nothing at all, nothing at all! I know no more about it than a babe unborn."

"Still, you've got something to tell us, I'm sure, or the superintendent wouldn't have brought you in. What is it?"

"Oh, please your honour, I have something to tell, but it ain't noways nothing to do with the murder."

"Well, well, let's have it, man; and make haste, for our time is valuable."

"Please, your worship, then," stammered the poor man, "I had been out at work yesterday at Squire Newman's, for there's a mortal deal to do in the garden and the grounds there, and only three men kept there reg'lar; and when I'd done, the head gardener he would have me come into the servants' hall to have a drop o' beer afore I went home,—for, you see, the gentry's away,—and so I went in, and the butler he were that pressing, and they was all such good company, that I couldn't get away till after eight o'clock, and by that time I won't say but what I'd had as much as was good for me ("as much as was bad for you, you mean," said the Mayor, who could not resist a joke), for you see, sir, the Squire's ale be terrible strong, and I ain't not to say used to anything of the kind. I wasn't tipsy, your worship, oh no, far from it, but I was what you may call jolly. Half-past eight had just struck by Woodville church clock, as I got to the corner of Mr. Robinson's park wall. Your worship knows, and everybody knows, that just there is a large chestnut tree, that my grandfather planted. I don't believe there's ne'er such another for miles round; why, its branches hang over the wall ever so far. I never know'd—"

Here Mr. Jolliffe lost all patience, and cried out, "Come, Saunders, come, let's hear about something else; that'll do for the chestnut tree."

"Just as your worship pleases," answered the gardener, in a submissive tone; "I'm here to do as you wish; but if I ain't to speak about the old chestnut, I ain't got nothing no more to say."

Here Mr. Bosworth interposed just as he had done before, when little Alice was telling her tale, "Never mind, Saunders, you go on; I can see that the tree has something to do with your story, hasn't it?"

"'Deed, sir, it have," was the reply; "you've just nicked it."

Mr. Jolliffe nodded his assent, so he continued:

"Well, sir, this is just how it were. Cæsar was barking away up at the house, so I lean'd up ag'in the wall, and says I to myself, 'Ned, old fellow, you're all right enough; in ten minutes you'll be home, but you may as well have a

smoke first !” So I fills my old clay pipe, and had the flamer in my hand, just ready to light up, when I hears a noise in the tree right above my head.”

“ Ah,” said the lawyer, “ and what then ? ”

“ Why, the branches cracked above a bit, a lot of leaves fell, and just as I’d struck a light, down tumbled some one all of a heap in front of me, and rushed off as fast as his legs would carry him.”

“ And did you see him ? ” asked the Mayor eagerly.

“ Yes, sir, as plain as I see you now, but only for a moment.”

“ Did you know him ? ”

“ Yes, and no, sir. That’s to say I know’d him, so to speak, without knowing him. He warn’t one of our Woodville folk, but I seed him a many times along with them there acting people as came into the town with their show.”

“ And his name ? ” asked Mr. Jolliffe excitedly.

“ Well, sir, ’tain’t altogether a Chris’en man’s name, and I don’t hardly know whether I’ve got hold of it rightly, but I did hear ’em call him Bazi Bazoum ; leastways, so it sounded to me.”

The lawyer could not help saying to the Mayor, “ I think we’re on the right track now. We shall have something to tell the coroner when he comes.” Then turning to Saunders, “ Well, my friend, and when you saw this man tumble headlong out of the tree, what did you think ? ”

“ Why, sir, to tell you the truth, and no lies, I ain’t no opinion o’ them there performing folk. Seems to me as if they ain’t noways over particular, so I thought this ’ere Bazi Bazoum might have been looking up Master Armstrong’s poultry.”

“ Then why didn’t you give the alarm up at the house ? ”

“ Well, to tell you the truth, sir, I’d half a mind to do so ; but when I come to think of it, I says, ‘ what’s the good ? likely enough John Armstrong’s a-bed by this time, and I wants to get home. I’ll come round first thing in the morning and let him know all about it.’ Sure enough I did, and so soon as I find myself at the gate, there’s a sight o’ people there, and they ups and tells me all about the murder. But I don’t think that ’ere Bazi Bazoum could ’a done it, ’cos as how when I was a-standing up under the

tree after he'd gone, I heard the bell ring, and John Arm strong a-speaking rough like to some one; but there, you see, I were a bit dazed, and can't rightly say. Howsomed'-ever, when I com'd up, I didn't see no one. I hope's no offence, your worship, but I can't say no more than I have done, and it's all gospel truth, and I'm mortal sorry for the poor creatures, for I never know'd no one better nor kinder than they was, both of 'em."

"That will do, Saunders," said the Mayor; "you may go, but don't leave the house. Now, Mr. Superintendent, you may bring in your other witness."

Andrew Mathieson, the bailiff at Lingfield Farm, was a very different style of man from the last witness. A tall, thin Scotchman, holding himself straight upright, speaking slowly and distinctly, with a slight accent, he seemed to think himself a person of considerable importance, and came forward with an air of being able to clear up any mystery that might attach to the affair, and as desiring to take those present into his confidence.

"Gentlemen," he began, with a curious sort of bow to each, "my name is Andrew Mathieson; you may perhaps have heard of me before, as I am not altogether unknown in this neighbourhood, for I hold a responsible position, and I flatter myself I've done something to open the eyes of the farmers round about, and give them a notion of what we can do up in the Lothians. So I feel proud to find myself associated with such honourable gentlemen, and will do what lies in my power to throw some light on this sad and mysterious affair."

"Good," said Mr. Bosworth, rather coldly; "it seems you know something about it."

"Well, sir," was the reply, "I think I may say I do."

"At what time then, and where," asked the lawyer, "did you see Bazi Bazoum?"

The bailiff replied with an astonished and somewhat disdainful air, "Bazi Bazoum! what, that ventriloquist fellow! Why, I know nothing at all about him, and never spoke to him in my life. I saw his name placarded on the walls, else I should not have known even that."

Both Mayor and lawyer regarded him with some surprise, but begged him to proceed in his own way.

"Well, then, gentlemen, to come to the point, I will not disguise from you that I belong to a club of congenial spirits who meet from time to time at the White Hart at Woodville, and hold friendly discussions among ourselves. I was there last evening, but was obliged to leave soon after eight o'clock, as I had to escort one of our young ladies home from a neighbour's; and you know, gentlemen, that when there's a lady in the case all else must give way."

"It is of some consequence," interrupted Mr. Bosworth, "that you should tell us exactly, or as nearly as possible, what time you left the town."

"I am glad, gentlemen," replied the bailiff, "to be able to tell you precisely; for just as I passed the last gas-lamp coming out of Woodville, the church clock struck the half-hour after eight. I had not gone more than five minutes along the road when I met some one going towards the town. It was very dark, so I grasped my oak cudgel tightly as I passed, and said 'good-night.' The stranger—for so I judged him to be from his voice, as he did not speak like the country folk in these parts—returned my greeting, and asked me if I could direct him to the Manor House. 'Oh,' I said, 'you've passed it; but if you'll turn back with me, I'll show you the entrance, as I'm going that way.' 'Thank you,' he replied, 'and I shall be glad to give you—' 'Oh, nothing,' I interrupted; 'I couldn't think of such a thing.' 'Why, surely,' he continued, 'you won't refuse a cigar!' 'Oh, that's another matter,' I said; 'I don't think I can say no to that.'

"So he took out his cigar-case, and struck a light. I could see by the light of the match what a beautiful case it was, and could even smell the Russian leather. I can assure you too that the cigar was first class, very different from what one gets down here. We began chatting, and he told me that he had come down from London by the express from Waterloo, at 4.55, which gets to Romsey at 7.7, and as there was no conveyance to Woodville he thought he would walk. 'Nothing of a walk,' he added, 'for a soldier.' 'A soldier?' I said. 'Oh, well,' he replied, in an off-hand way, 'of course I'm an officer, but a soldier all the same. I've come down to the Manor House on a visit.' 'Do you know John Armstrong?' I asked.

‘No,’ he replied, ‘I’ve never seen him, but I believe he expects me.’ He then made some inquiries about the shooting in the neighbourhood, and so on. By this time we had reached the great gates. So I told him that this was the Manor House, and I rang the bell for him, as I knew where it was.”

“I’ve one question to ask,” said Mr. Bosworth: “did you meet any one on the road?”

“Only a little girl,” replied the bailiff, “and she ran by so quickly that I could not tell who she was; to say nothing of its being so dark. We were kept waiting some time at the gate, and the dog began to bark loudly. I was just going to ring again, when we saw some one coming slowly down the avenue, with a lantern in his hand, and grumbling to himself all the way. When he got to the gate he asked, rather gruffly, who we were, and what we wanted at that time of night. My companion asked, ‘Are you John Armstrong?’ ‘Yes, sir,’ he replied, much more respectfully, as the tone of the voice showed him that it was a gentleman who was addressing him. ‘Well, then, my good fellow,’ continued the officer, ‘look sharp and open the gate. My name is Arthur Denison; I am Mr. Robinson’s nephew, and I believe he has written to tell you I was coming.’”

Here the Mayor and lawyer interchanged glances of extreme surprise.

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Bosworth, “Mr. Robinson’s nephew here last night?”

“Good heavens!” cried Mr. Jolliffe, “is it possible? Why, he must be Miss Maude’s brother. What has become of him? Are there fresh horrors in store for us?”

“Let us hear,” said Mr. Bosworth, “whether Andrew Mathieson has any more evidence to give, and then we must consider what action to take.”

“I do not think, gentlemen,” said the bailiff, “that I can enlighten you much further. As soon as John Armstrong heard Mr. Denison’s name, he broke out into an exclamation of surprise, apology, and delight all in one breath; opened the gate as quickly as he could, and seemed almost beside himself with excitement. He said he had not expected the captain till the next day, when all would have been ready for him.

“‘Come in, sir,’ he cried; ‘come in; you shall have the best of everything. It will be strange if Mary and I can’t find a cabin for you, and get you a bit of sea-pie for supper. Come in, come in.’

“So I wished them both good-night, and hurried home to keep my appointment. I fancied I saw some one near the end of the park wall, but I wasn’t sure, and as he did not speak, if there was any one, neither did I. I must now leave it, gentlemen, to your superior intelligence to turn my information to account.”

“Before you go,” said Mr. Bosworth, “you must be so good as to tell us whether you would recognise Captain Denison, if you were to see him again.”

“Scarcely, sir, as I only caught a glimpse of him for a moment when John Armstrong held up his lantern; but I could see that he was fair and had a military moustache.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Jolliffe; “but do not leave the house, indeed you may as well accompany us in our further search.”

CHAPTER X.

IN THE RED ROOM.

“It is now clear,” observed Mr. Bosworth, “that the silver dishes were brought out for Captain Denison, and no wonder he eat such a hearty supper after his long walk from Romsey. Now we must find out where he slept, and I fear we must prepare ourselves for fresh horrors. Superintendent, will you bring in that child Alice again, no doubt she knows the house.”

On being questioned, she replied that the best bedroom was called the red room, and most likely Captain Denison had slept there.

So they all went up the grand staircase, with quiet tread and beating hearts. The outside world seemed for the

time to have vanished out of their lives, and to have left them to take their parts in a tragedy, the like of which they had never even conceived ; and their excited imaginations prepared them for some fearful climax. The thought of another body terribly mutilated, another scene of indescribable horror, made them pause before they opened the door of this awful red room, a name henceforth to be associated with the thought of murder and bloodshed.

What they really *did* see when the door was opened was so different from what they had expected, that they felt a sort of shock caused by sudden reaction. For the bright rays of the sun, streaming through the large windows, shone upon a scene of perfect order and peace. Although the room had evidently been used the preceding night, everything was in its place, no sign of disturbance or disarrangement. On a table by the side of the bed (the bright crimson hangings of which gave its name to the room) was a wax candle in a silver candlestick, a small decanter of brandy, with a couple of soda-water bottles in a stand, and a pocket-book, which also served as a cigar-case, and which seemed to have been overlooked by its owner. In short, the room had just the same appearance that might have been expected in a well-ordered gentleman's house.

The first exclamation, which broke the silence of amazement, came from the bailiff, Andrew Mathieson, who, with the rest, after a short pause, had entered the room.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "that is the very case from which the captain gave me a cigar. I think I could almost swear to it by the smell, and I saw something glitter on the outside as he opened it."

Mr. Bosworth took up the pocket-book or cigar-case, for it might be called either, and examined it carefully. On the outside was a gilt monogram with the letters A.D. interlaced. It had a silver-gilt edging, which closed with a snap, and inside were three small cigars of the best quality, and opposite, a division for holding cards and a few letters, but the case was not a bulky one, and was evidently intended for the convenience of a gentleman of fashion, rather than as the receptacle of the correspondence of a man of business.

Mr. Bosworth took out the cards and letters, and noting the address, "Captain Denison, 50th Hussars," replaced them

as he had found them, and put the pocket-book on the table, merely remarking, "We will examine these presently; but the first question is, what has become of the young man? It seems incredible that in the middle of the night he should have got up and left a house to which he had only just come."

"Perhaps," suggested the Mayor, "they took him somewhere else to murder him."

"Is that likely?" asked Mr. Bosworth. "They could have killed him here as well as anywhere else. Notice, too, that he went out of this room fully dressed, and that he left nothing behind him but his pocket-book. So he must have had plenty of time to get up and dress himself at his leisure."

"Yes, yes," replied the excitable Mayor, "I grant all that; but still I repeat my question, what has become of him? where is he?"

"We will search the house from top to bottom," said Mr. Bosworth, "as soon as we have locked up this room."

So the search began, and was thoroughly carried out. From garret to basement every hole and corner was examined; not a cupboard was left unexplored; even old chests hidden away in dark corners were dragged out into daylight. Since the old house had been built it had probably never been subjected to such a ransack, but all in vain. There was not the slightest trace of Arthur Denison, dead or alive. It seemed almost as if the young man had faded away into empty space, leaving the Mayor and lawyer to search for a phantom.

Mr. Bosworth was as much at fault as a good hound who has lost the scent. "What does this mean?" he stammered out. "I find myself on the threshold of a mystery that seems to lead to some awful conclusion. I begin to doubt my senses. Am I awake, or under the influence of some frightful nightmare?"

As for poor Mr. Jolliffe, he could only give utterance to groans and "Ah me's!" and kept wiping the perspiration from his forehead in a state of hopeless perplexity.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM SCOTLAND YARD.

It is hardly needful to state that all these enquiries and searchings had taken up a great deal of time, and it was past one o'clock when the officials found themselves again in the large entrance hall of the Manor House. As the last of the party stepped down from the staircase, the sound of wheels was heard outside, and the Mayor, rushing excitedly to the side window, cried out, "I told you I'd back my Irish mare, Biddy, against any horse or mare in the New Forest; pray mark the time. The coroner no doubt missed the express, and so took the 11.30 train from Southampton, which reaches Romsey at 12.11, say a quarter past 12, and here he is when the clock has just struck one. My Biddy against the world."

The feelings of the poor Mayor had been wrought up to such a pitch of excitement, that he seemed to find a momentary relief, a sort of safety-valve, in thus dwelling on the performance of his horse. "But," he continued, "the coroner is not alone; I wonder who his companion is?" So saying he threw open the front door, and stood at the head of the flight of steps to receive the new arrivals.

The coroner, Charles Twyford by name, was a man of about five-and-forty years of age, rather above the ordinary height, thin, intellectual-looking, but otherwise not specially remarkable. He had started in life as a medical man, but his health having failed, in consequence of great exertion during a severe outbreak of fever in the New Forest, he had been appointed coroner to the Woodville district. Since his appointment he had not only brought his medical experience to bear upon his professional duties, but had also devoted himself to legal study in the same direction; and he regarded every case brought before him with so much acumen, and with such scrupulous attention, that he had more than once received the thanks of the Home Secretary for the way in which he discharged his duties as coroner.

Dr. Twyford's companion was a good deal younger than himself, seemingly about five-and-thirty, he might be more or less. That phrase "might be" would not have inaptly described him. He was a kind of man whom you would have passed in a crowd, and if pressed for an exact description of him, you would have found yourself at fault. Neither tall nor short, neither handsome nor ugly, with no specially prominent or striking feature, dressed in ordinary clothes, everything about him of a sort of neutral tint, a man who would seem to you "nobody in particular," but in fact he was somebody *very* particular, being none other than Thomas Stratton, the famous detective from Scotland Yard. He had been engaged in a very difficult case at Southampton, which he afterwards worked out in a most remarkable manner, and brought to a successful issue; but having, like a spider in his web, woven all the threads which would lead to the certain capture of the criminal fly, he was free for a short time, and when Mr. Jolliffe telegraphed to London for help from the Investigation Department, his answer was an immediate and practical one, as Thomas Stratton was ordered at once to go to Woodville, and to put himself in communication with the authorities of that place, for the furtherance of the ends of justice. He met the coroner at the Southampton Docks station, and told him his errand, but of course neither of them could give or receive any information about a case of which they were both equally ignorant. At Romsey they found Mr. Jolliffe's vehicle waiting for them. Sam Wilkins, the groom, proved equal to the occasion, and landed them safely at the Manor House, Biddy beating any previous record of time occupied in making the journey.

The coroner then introduced his companion to the Mayor, the lawyer, and the superintendent of police, and without loss of time the details of the terrible tragedy, so far as they were known, were laid before him, and the witnesses repeated the leading points of the evidence which they had previously related to the Mayor and Mr. Bosworth.

The bodies of poor John Armstrong and his daughter were then viewed, and by order of the coroner were decently laid out on the large table in the laundry, ready for a post-mortem examination. Dr. Smart, the medical man of Wood-

ville, had unfortunately been called away early in the morning to a pressing case of sickness some miles away, and so knew nothing of what had taken place at the Manor House; but immediately on his return he hurried there, and arrived about an hour after the coroner. No time was lost in making the required dissection, evidence being specially wanted to fix, if possible, the exact time of the murder. How important this evidence was will presently be seen. The result of the medical examination proved that the poor murdered creatures must have partaken of their own homely supper between eight and nine o'clock, and after having provided for the comfort of Mr. Robinson's nephew, must have retired to their rooms about 11 p.m., and were roused soon after midnight, only to meet their doom at the murderer's hand, and to sink into the sleep of the grave.

While the medical examination was being made, and the coroner was issuing his precept for the inquest to be held at twelve o'clock on the following day, the detective officer commenced his work by some preliminary enquiries.

"May I ask you, sir," he said, addressing Mr. Jolliffe, "whether you found any of the doors of the house open on your arrival?"

"So far from that being the case," replied the Mayor, "we were obliged to employ the locksmith to force the front door, which was done with some difficulty. The large house key was hanging behind the entrance door, and I believe is hanging there still."

"Has any arrest yet been made on suspicion?"

"No," was the reply; "but I have almost decided on issuing a warrant against one person, who seems to me to be implicated."

"Has the owner of the property been communicated with?"

"Not at present, as we did not know his address."

Inspector Stratton then proceeded to John Armstrong's room, accompanied by the officials, and immediately turned his attention to a door which opened into a small garden, as could be seen from a window on the same side of the room. This door was locked, but he easily opened it with a sort of pass-key. A strong iron bar which secured it on the inside had been removed, and there was little doubt that the

murderer left the house by this door and threw away the key. This key and a lantern were afterwards found in the stable-yard, from which place the ladder had been taken, which has already been mentioned as having been discovered by the gamekeeper, Tony Scott, near the entrance gate of the Manor House.

In addition to the articles which had been hurled headlong from the cupboards, in the wild and passionate search made by the murderer, there were fragments of wood from the panels of the cupboards, and from the lids of the heavy chests which had been *smashed* open (no other word can at all convey any idea of the force used). These fragments lay strewn on the floor, many of them marked with blood; nor was it far to seek whence that blood had come, for in one corner of the room, evidently having been hurled away when its work of destruction was done, lay the weapon by which the deadly blow had been dealt. It was an axe, of the pattern ordinarily used for domestic purposes, and had probably been taken from the kitchen, having caught the murderer's eye.

The inspector could discover no trace of the knife by which poor Mary had been despatched.

He now proceeded slowly and minutely to examine the room, allowing nothing to escape his notice. He turned over one by one the various articles lying on the floor, clothes, linen, account books, and some small bags containing samples of seeds. He knew by long experience how often some little thing, seemingly valueless or insignificant, had proved to be the first or the last link in the chain of evidence needful for the conviction of the criminal. Accordingly, in shaking one of the old sailor's jackets thrown on the heap, a couple of coins dropped out of the folds, and rolled away to the end of the room.

"What is that?" asked the Mayor quickly.

The inspector picked them up and gave them to him, saying at the same time, "You see, they are two Russian gold pieces, both Imperials. No doubt there were more, but these two pieces rolled out as the assassin was filling his pockets, and as they fell noiselessly probably escaped his notice. It is now perfectly clear, even if there had been any doubt before, that robbery was the motive for the murder."

"But how," inquired Mr. Jolliffe, "was it likely that a man in John Armstrong's position in life would have any considerable sum of money in his possession?"

"I cannot say," was the answer. "The owner of the property will give us all necessary information on this point."

"No doubt. But how came the murderer to be acquainted with the fact that there was a large sum of money in this particular room, though as evidently he did not know where to lay his hands on it?"

"That is more than I can tell you," replied the detective; "if only we could learn that, we should soon be on the track of the culprit. But what puzzles me is the fact that this is foreign money. Russian gold is not current in this country, and cannot easily be passed. This may help us in our investigation. But how did these coins come here?"

"Oh," said the lawyer, "that can easily be explained. Mr. Robinson has large dealings with foreign countries, and no doubt these pieces form part of the payment for some transaction with Russian merchants."

"That may be," replied the detective; "but surely he would never hand over foreign money to his steward, as it would be useless for the payment of current expenses. I feel sure that these gold coins formed part of a larger sum entrusted to the steward for safe keeping."

"Not unlikely," said the lawyer; "indeed, from what I know of Mr. Robinson, I think it quite probable. Any one else would have had the money paid into his account with his banker, but in some respects the old gentleman is very eccentric."

"Well then," resumed the inspector, "we may reasonably suppose that the murderer was aware that the money was here, but as he did not know where to lay his hand on it, he was prepared, as you see, almost to pull the house down in his efforts to find it. If you wish for proof of what I have said, please to follow me."

With these words he crossed the passage which separated John Armstrong's room from that of his daughter, and they all entered poor Mary's chamber, which was quite a model of cleanliness and neatness.

"Now remark," continued the inspector, "that every-

thing here is in perfect order ; neither cupboard nor drawers have been opened. The murderer never crossed this threshold, and why should he? Having found what he wanted, his only thought was to make his escape with his booty as soon as possible. If the poor girl had slept in some distant part of the house, her life might not have been sacrificed, but it is useless to enter upon possibilities when our business lies with actualities."

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE TRACK.

"WELL then, Inspector," asked Mr. Bosworth, "are you fairly satisfied with the progress made in this preliminary stage of the investigation?"

"Yes," was the reply, given with a certain amount of hesitation ; "I have no reason to be otherwise, but a case like this must not be hurried over. It has to be considered most carefully ; there must be no jumping at conclusions. The public often make a great mistake about our work. They fall into a double error. On the one hand they think that we are endowed with a sort of supernatural intelligence, and that by a kind of spiritualism we can at once unravel the most tangled skein of crime, which any one else would utterly fail to do ; or they go to the other extreme, and when a case is all finished, and the criminal traced, tracked, and run to earth, the process seems so simple and each step so easy and natural, that every one says, 'Why, of course the whole business was perfectly clear from the beginning, and it required no special training, no exceptional intelligence to follow it up.' I should like to inform this same public that there is nothing we dread so much as being interfered with, either by way of praise or blame. Our work is like that of the mole, carried on quietly and secretly. Calmness, patience, and distrust of first impressions are elementary lessons in our branch of the force ; and I can invariably

trace any success I may have had, to my steady following out of these principles. But I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for having detained you by these observations."

"Pray make no apology, Mr. Inspector," replied the Mayor; "we are only too glad to know that we can count on the help of one so experienced as yourself, in order to enable us successfully to work out this most terrible mystery, and you may count beforehand on our giving you all the assistance in our power. But there is one point on which we should like your opinion, and that is with regard to this Bazi Bazoum, as they call him. Should I issue a warrant for his apprehension? Do you think his guilt is sufficiently proved?"

The inspector shook his head without speaking.

"What!" asked the Mayor, "do you then believe that he is innocent?"

The inspector shook his head again, but with this remark, "As you have done me the honour, sir, to ask for my opinion, I may tell you frankly that I am not convinced of his innocence, still less of his guilt. I am in a state of doubt."

"Appearances, however," persisted Mr. Jolliffe, "are very much against him."

"May I venture to ask you, sir, to what you specially refer?"

"Well," replied the Mayor, "the fact of his being found in the park at the very hour when the murder was committed, then his placing the ladder against the wall, and scrambling down from the chestnut tree, to say nothing of his rushing away, seem to me conclusive evidence against him."

"They are proofs," rejoined the detective, "of his having come probably to see Mary Armstrong again, although she had forbidden him to do so; but as yet I cannot see there is evidence of anything more; for you must allow me to observe, that in order to have committed this double murder (his sweetheart too being one of his supposed victims), he must have returned to the Manor House after he had left it."

"Why so? if at the moment he was seen by Edward Saunders the murder had been already committed?"

"But I venture to say," persisted the inspector, "that

this was not possible. Saunders asserts distinctly that half-past eight had struck just before he reached the corner of the park wall. This was soon after the little girl Alice Holland had left the house, and about the time that Andrew Mathieson met Captain Denison outside the town, and accompanied him to the park gate, which gate was opened by John Armstrong, who clearly was alive at that time; so it is impossible that he and his daughter could have been in bed and asleep, or the murder committed, at the time when this Bazi Bazoum let himself down into the road by the chestnut tree. Nor have I learnt yet, whether the ladder which Scott saw against the park wall was close to the tree or not. This will be an important point in the evidence."

"True," returned the Mayor; "but Saunders admitted that he had been drinking freely of the Squire's ale, and I don't suppose he knew exactly what half-hour the church clock was striking. Anyhow, I still hold to my opinion, that this juggler or ventriloquist, or whatever he may be, is implicated in this crime, and I think I shall be authorized in issuing a warrant for his apprehension, so that, if possible, he may appear at the coroner's inquest to-morrow."

"I am sure, sir, that you will be perfectly justified in taking this step, and meantime I will continue my researches."

The Mayor now turned to the superintendent of police, and addressing him, asked whether the travelling caravan had quitted Woodville.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "they went to Dedworth yesterday morning, and I believe are to have a performance there this evening."

"Then I desire you to take one of your police-constables with you, and to start at once for Dedworth. I will write out a warrant for the apprehension of a travelling actor, known by the name of Bazi Bazoum, on suspicion of being concerned in a burglary at Woodville Manor House. I have my reasons for not mentioning the more serious charge, about which you must say nothing. The warrant can be amended, and his real name inserted when he is in custody. Effect the capture as quietly as you can, though at the same time be prepared for resistance. If, as is most

probable, he has taken to flight, you must at once follow up any trace you can find, and I can hardly impress upon you the necessity for prompt and vigorous action. If you succeed in arresting him, convey him at once to the lock-up in Woodville, and let me be informed of your arrival, even if it is in the middle of the night."

"Your worship may depend upon your instructions being carried out in every particular."

So saying, the superintendent saluted the magistrate, and, accompanied by his attendant, started for Dedworth without delay, in search of Bazi Bazoum, whither we will accompany him.

CHAPTER XIII.

MY WIFE AND I.

It was nearly dark before the police-officers arrived at Dedworth, and, having put up their trap at the Red Deer, they lost no time in betaking themselves to the show, which they found without difficulty, as most of the inhabitants of the little town were wending their way in the same direction. Everything was much the same as it had been at Woodville, when little Alice Holland had been so attracted by all she saw. The lights were flaring, the music was playing, the same request to walk up was being repeated by the same man, as it seemed in the same voice, and there was an equal amount of pushing and squeezing in order to secure good places. The policemen waited till the crush was over, and as they occupied seats at the back they did not attract much attention.

It may be mentioned here, that although some rumour of the murders at Woodville had reached Dedworth during the day, nothing very definite was known, and Bazi Bazoum,

having gone out early in the day to make arrangements for a performance in the next town, had only just returned, and so knew nothing of any reports from Woodville.

The order of the entertainment was as before; first conjuring tricks, then some acrobats came on the stage, and then a flourish of trumpets, or what did duty for them, heralded the "Great Attraction" of the evening, in the person of Bazi Bazoum. He was dressed as before, in Highland costume, and held his companion, the famous talking-doll, daintily poised on his left hand. He seemed about eight-and-twenty years of age, with black hair, a bronzed complexion, and dark piercing eyes, which shone with fun rather than malice, while his general appearance was decidedly prepossessing.

"Not half a bad-looking fellow," whispered the superintendent to his companion; "but he must have a precious nerve to come on as unconcerned as he does. I was half afraid he would have given us the slip, but he won't have the chance now."

Bazi Bazoum meantime having made his bow to the audience, thus commenced,

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you my little wife, who makes up in spirit what she lacks in size."

He had scarcely uttered these words, and the doll on his hand was curtsying to the people, when a husky voice, seemingly that of some young fellow, half-tipsy and wholly up to mischief, called out from the roof,

"Your wife, indeed! tell that to the marines; that won't go down here. I wonder where you bought her. I'll be bound you paid a pretty penny for her smart toggery."

In a moment every face was turned up to the roof, which, being made of canvas, loosely stretched across, seemed quite incapable of supporting any one; but no sooner were all eyes directed upwards, than the same voice was heard below, calling out,

"Oh, what a set of bloomin' fools you be! Here's a lark; look out for your legs, or maybe I'll pinch them."

The voice seemed so unmistakeably to come from below, that all the women hastily gathered their petticoats together, and the men stooped down to look through the

staging on which the rows of seats were ranged one above the other, but of course, being dark, they could see nothing.

The ventriloquist now advanced hastily to the foot-lights, and said in his natural voice,

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is most disgraceful, and quite insufferable. I really cannot allow the performance to be disturbed in this unseemly manner. This stupid fellow ought to be severely punished for his buffoonery. Some persons perhaps would have him turned out, but I must make an example of him, and instead of turning him out, I'll send him a few feet underground, and see how he relishes that."

"Oh! O—o—h! A—a—h!" groaned the same voice, getting more and more indistinct, as if coming out of a well. "It's jolly cold down here, and ain't it just dark. I'm well-nigh froze already. Atchi—atchi—Oh, master, I be mortal sorry. I'll never do so no more. Do pray draw me up again."

"Too late, my friend," replied Bazi Bazoum; "I'll teach you to play your tomfoolery on me. No, my fine fellow, you'll have to stay where you are till the performance is over, and you may think yourself lucky if I let you out then."

Not giving the audience time to recover from their astonishment, the ventriloquist, with a smile on his lips, said,

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I think I can promise you that we shall have no more such interruptions this evening, and so I may again proceed with the introduction of my wife, who has much pleasure in making your acquaintance. She looks as meek as a mouse, and as quiet as a lamb. No doubt you are thinking of the old proverb, 'Little and good,' and perhaps fancy that she is like the famous cocoa, 'Grateful—comforting.' Quite a mistake, I do assure you. There's no more dependence to be placed in her than in the rest of her sex. We're told that we ought to wash our dirty linen at home; but just for this once I'll let you behind the scenes, and give you a glimpse of our domestic felicity, and then, I think, you'll own that all is not gold that glitters, and that there *are* cases in which 'marriage is a failure.' In plain English, this good woman's tongue is as long as to-day and

to-morrow; she's got an awful temper, she drinks like a fish, and her vanity is beyond all belief."

All this time the doll gave signs of uncontrollable agitation; at each word that Bazi Bazoum uttered she seemed ready to fly at him; at last, in a shrill and high-pitched voice, she broke out,

"Hold your tongue, sir; aren't you ashamed of yourself to go and expose a poor defenceless woman before a lot of strangers, and to tell such a parcel of lies too?"

"Lies," returned the ventriloquist; "lies, eh? We'll see about that. I suppose you don't mean to deny that your tongue's always going like a mill-clack?"

"Indeed then I do," retorted the little creature, speaking so quickly that the words seemed to be tripping each other up, and stops were quite out of the question. "I mean to say you don't often find any one talk less than I do; you never, no, *never*, hear a needless word out of my lips; I ain't like some people, who are always gossiping about their neighbours' business, and neglecting their own; you don't find me going from house to house like those chatter-magging Bets with their hand in everybody else's pie, and everybody else's affairs at the tip of their tongues. No;" here she was obliged to stop and take breath. "No, thank goodness, I've enough to do to look after my own house and manage my own affairs. A chatterbox, indeed! I wonder what next! No, if I have a fault it is that I don't talk enough, and often and often I let myself be put upon because I won't make any words."

"There, there," said her husband, "as they say in the newspapers, 'to be continued in our next,' for I think that's nearly enough for the present. But I suppose you'll hardly pretend you've got a good temper?"

"Good temper, indeed," was the reply; "I think I'd need to have a good temper to live with *you*. What's that you're muttering? *Who broke our best china tea service in a rage?* Why, I did, to be sure; and so would any other woman put upon as I am. Made a regular slave from morning to night, and then to have to put up with all your tantrums, and bad language and overbearing ways. I won't stand them any longer, so I tell you. Just let me hear you say again that I've got a bad temper, and I'll

pinch you, I'll bite you, I'll scratch out your eyes with a rusty nail."

"Thank you," said the ventriloquist, "that'll do; that's a pretty fair specimen for the company to judge by. Now, what about your drinking?"

"What do you say? drinking, indeed! when you know I'm all but a teetotaler! I wonder who drinks less than I do? I suppose you don't call a glass of rum and milk in the morning drinking, do you? And how do you suppose I could last out till dinner-time, if I didn't have a pint of old ale at eleven with just a dash of gin to keep the cold off the stomach? while it's seldom enough, goodness knows, that I take more than a pot of stout and mild with my dinner, and a drop of something short after, because you know what a weak digestion I have. I won't say but what I like a quartern or so of gin with my cup of tea, because I suffer dreadful with the spasms; and the doctors do say that a glass or two of hot grog the last thing at night is very sovereign against the wind, but I never allow myself more than three at the outside. What, you're muttering again? *How about that flat bottle I carry in my pocket?* Well, you must be a brute to grudge me that. No one calling himself a man would ever demean himself so far as to notice what a female carries in her pocket. I wish you knew what that sinking feeling is, that comes over me now and again, you'd be glad enough to have a bottle handy just to put your lips to, and bring you round a bit. But drinking—no, indeed, I'd never lower myself to that. I'm not one of those soakers that spend all their days in a public-house. Little and often is all I want, for I'm what you may call a *very* moderate drinker. I wish nobody took more than I do. Drinking, indeed!"

"Well then, we'll drop that. But how about your vanity?"

"And pray what do *you* call vanity? No one but a mean-spirited, miserly fellow like you would ever dare to use such a word to me, just because I don't happen to be as plain-looking as some people. And what do you know about ladies' dresses? What's that? *You know a good deal about milliners' bills?* Well, and suppose you do? Oughtn't you to be proud to spend your money upon some one that's a

credit to you, and has got a good figure to set off a good dress? And yet, if it comes to that, I may say I've hardly got a rag to my back. Except my crimson velvet, and the pink satin, and the shot silk, and the moire antique, and this dress that I've got on, why I've nothing fit to wear of an afternoon. What? *Why do I want to smarten myself up in that ridiculous manner?* Well, it's very hard if I can't make myself respectable when we come to a good-sized town, and I can have a few minutes to go out. Yes, I say a *few minutes*; so you needn't repeat my words. I know your jealous temper. If you had your own way you'd keep me mewed and stewed up in a wretched lodging, while you went out to leer at all the pretty girls in the place. Not if I know it! Oh! you odious tyrant! What? *You'll give me a lesson if I don't take care?* Will you, though?"

"Ay, that I will," replied the ventriloquist in his natural voice; "and at once, too."

So saying, with a sudden movement he thrust the doll into the sporran, or pouch, which he wore before him. There was something at first irresistibly comic, and then supremely tragic in the scene which followed. At first the little figure could be seen moving, struggling, fighting to get out of her prison; then in a voice from which all the shrillness had disappeared, there came complaints, and entreaties, which, after a time, were succeeded by screams of rage, and the wildest imprecations.

"Will you be quiet?" at last said the ventriloquist, in a savage tone; "if not, I'll just twist your neck."

As the doll continued her screams, Bazi Bazoum began to carry his threat into execution. Then there came from the pouch the most heart-rending shrieks,

"Murder! murder! help! oh, he's killing me, the villain! Oh, help, help!"

Gradually the cries got weaker and weaker; they seemed to be strangled by an iron hand on the victim's throat. Then by degrees they died away into the death-rattle. Then followed profound silence.

The superintendent turned to his companion,

"Why, my very blood is freezing in my veins. Good God! To think that last night poor Mary Armstrong must

have uttered some such cry when the villain cut her throat, and now here he is making a farce of her death agony. He's not a man; he must be a very devil incarnate. I can hardly keep my hands off him. But we shall soon have him."

Although the audience could not share the feelings of the policemen, and were perfectly aware that it was only a vocal exhibition that they were listening to, still it was with a certain feeling of relief that they saw Bazi Bazoum take the doll out of his pocket, and gradually restore it to the semblance of life. At first the poor little thing hung limp and lifeless; but he felt her pulse, soothed and caressed her, brought her gradually round, and then graciously promised to overlook all her faults, past and future, and then presented her to the spectators in as bright and lively a condition as when he had first brought her on the stage.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARRESTED.

It is almost needless to say that the ventriloquist received round upon round of applause; and it seemed as if he would scarcely ever cease bowing his acknowledgments. Other performances followed in which he took no part; but as soon as he quitted the stage, the two police officers left their places, went out and stationed themselves, one on each side of an opening in the canvas at the back of the caravan, which served as a door for the use of the actors. After waiting a few minutes, a man was in the act of coming out when the superintendent stopped the way.

"Are you Bazi Bazoum?"

"Yes, certainly I am," was the reply; "what do you want with me?"

"Now, no noise or scandal," said the superintendent, "for I can assure you that any resistance on your part will be useless."

"But I ask you again," exclaimed the ventriloquist, "who are you, and what do you want with me?"

"I am superintendent of the district police," was the answer, "and I have a warrant for your arrest."

On hearing these terrible words, Bazi Bazoum, who by this time had come outside, made an involuntary step backwards, but in a moment a hand was firmly placed on his shoulder by one policeman, and his arm was seized by the other. The ventriloquist, however, recovering his presence of mind, said,

"Oh! you needn't be afraid; I'm not going to run away. Only you understand that at the first moment I couldn't help being startled, as I didn't know who you were in the dark."

"Well, then, now you understand that it is our duty to carry out the law."

"Certainly," replied Bazi Bazoum; "but how does that concern me? I have not done anything wrong."

"Maybe you have, or maybe you haven't," replied the policeman, "but that is not our business. All we have to do is to take you before the magistrate, and then you can say what you like."

"The magistrate!" stammered the ventriloquist; "what magistrate?"

"Why, the one who signed the warrant, to be sure."

"Well, but who is he?" persisted Bazi Bazoum; "and where are you going to take me to?"

"To Woodville," was the reply.

"To Woodville?" said the ventriloquist in a broken voice; and then, in a lower tone to himself, "Ah! just what I was afraid of; that man must have been talking."

The superintendent made no remark on these words, but carefully noted them in his memory, as he had often found that such compromising expressions escaping from the mouth of criminals at the moment of their arrest, furnished afterwards very important evidence against them.

"But," he continued, "we must move on; no one has noticed us yet, and the less noise made the better."

"I am quite ready to follow you. Whatever suspicion may have fallen on me; I have only to see the magistrate, and can prove my innocence at once."

"So much the better for you," replied the superintendent.

"But," pleaded Bazi Bazoum, "I don't want to go before the magistrate in this dress. Let me anyhow put on my own clothes."

"Have you got to go far to change them?"

"No, close by; just in that caravan where I sleep and keep my things. I shan't be a minute. You needn't be afraid it's a dodge to get away. Besides, you will not leave me."

"Well then, look sharp."

A dim lamp hung from the roof of the travelling van, and in one corner a little boy was seated three parts asleep. He just opened his eyes to see who had come in, and then leant his head again down upon his arms.

The policeman stood in the doorway.

Bazi Bazoum did not take long over his toilette. A pair of dark tweed trousers, with waistcoat and frock-coat to match, replaced his Highland costume, and while his appearance was naturally changed, he still retained the prepossessing look which he had before, and which led the policeman to say, in a tone less sharp than he had hitherto used,

"If you have a great-coat anywhere about, I should advise you to bring it, as you won't find overmuch covering in your room to-night."

As they came down the wooden steps, the people were streaming out of the show, but as every one was talking eagerly of the wonderful performance, they passed in the dark without notice, and made their way by the back entrance to the Red Deer.

As soon as the policeman had driven out the trap from the stable yard, the superintendent, who had hold of the ventriloquist's arm, now turned to him and said,

"Jump up in front and sit on that heap of straw between us, but first put out your hands."

Bazi Bazoum turned deadly pale.

"Put out my hands," he repeated; "what for?"

"Only just to slip these bracelets over your wrists."

"What!" cried the young man in a tone of horror and disgust, "are they handcuffs?"

"There is no help for it," said the superintendent.

"No help for it," was the reply; "what do you mean? Why, they only put handcuffs on criminals. I'm not one of that sort. I'm an honest man, I can assure you; and I'm sure there's some mistake, which will be cleared up directly I get to Woodville. You know I've not made the least resistance, nor shall I; on my honour I will not try to escape."

At the word "honour" the superintendent shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, yes, we know all about that; but it won't go down, it's always the same story. Here, Wilson, bring us a light."

The policeman unhooked one of the lamps from the front of the trap, and brought it to his chief. The light was not raised high enough to show the look of shame, almost of agony, on Bazi Bazoum's face, but it caught the reflection of something bright which he wore on the breast of his coat.

"Where did you get that?" asked the superintendent, in a tone of surprise, taking the lamp into his hand, and throwing the light full on a military medal with clasp.

"Before I went about with this travelling company," replied the ventriloquist, "I was in the army, in the 50th Hussars. I served under Sir Frederick Roberts in Afghanistan, and under General Graham in Egypt. At Kassassin I saved my captain's life, but was wounded and got my discharge."

"Ah," said the superintendent, with more emotion than he cared to show, "so you've been a soldier, have you, and got a medal? Well, it won't match exactly with handcuffs, so perhaps they may as well go back into my pocket. A soldier, eh! We must look a little further into this."

So saying he put the handcuffs into his pocket again.

"Thank you, thank you," broke out Bazi Bazoum, with an air of intense relief. "I cannot thank you enough;" and forgetting his actual position, stretched out his hand to the superintendent, who however drew back sharply, and said,

"If I give way so far as to put those unpleasant objects

out of sight, I beg that you will listen carefully to what I am going to say. I am answerable for carrying you safely to Woodville; so get up into the trap, and I shall drive; but I give you fair warning, my companion carries a revolver and so do I; if you make any attempt to give us the slip, you will find your running powers speedily stopped."

"What is the good of threatening me?" asked the ventriloquist; "haven't I already passed my word that I shall not try to get away?"

"Well, well," replied the superintendent, shrugging his shoulders, but not nearly so high as before, "get in, for it's time we were off."

Not a word was spoken on the road.

"It's very strange," thought Superintendent Melville to himself, "how I've changed my mind about this ventriloquist fellow. As I came along I made sure we were on the right track, but then how wonderfully easy he seemed to take it during his performance if he'd actually had a hand last night in that double murder. My word! he must have a nerve—but no, I can't think it possible. If he'd been a jail-bird it would have been different, but he hasn't the look of one; besides, now he says he's been a soldier and saved his captain's life in battle, he'd hardly have the cheek to wear that medal and clasp if he'd no right to it. I wonder whether he stole it. Well, I'm glad I have not got to decide the matter."

It was nearly midnight before they entered Woodville. The little town was as silent as the grave, but as they passed Mr. Jolliffe's house they could see the lights in the windows, showing that the worthy Mayor and his colleagues were waiting for the return of the police from Dedworth.

Woodville Town Hall was (as we stated at the opening of this tale) a building of some pretension, of which the inhabitants were very proud, and the London architect was considered to have added greatly to his fame by the design for its erection. Besides housing the Fire Engine on the ground floor, and affording space for a covered market, it enclosed within its precincts the police station, in connection with which were two cells, seldom tenanted, but always ready for use. They were furnished as such apartments usually are, and Bazi Bazoum was ushered into one

of them for the night, after an earnest entreaty to be brought before the magistrate as soon as possible. There we too must leave him, while we return to the Manor House and learn what took place after the departure of the superintendent.

CHAPTER XV.

INSPECTOR STRATTON.

It will be remembered that the chief officials concerned in the endeavour to clear up the mystery of these frightful murders—that is to say, the Mayor and lawyer of Woodville—had passed the whole of the day at the Manor House; that soon after one o'clock they had been joined by the coroner, who was accompanied by Inspector Stratton, while Dr. Smart hurried up about half-past two in the afternoon. By the time the post-mortem examination was concluded, and the detective officer had gone carefully over the evidence of the witnesses, the day was drawing to a close.

There was something very weird and ghastly in the look of the Manor House, dimly lit, and already haunted as it were by the cry for vengeance on the cruel murderer; while the hushed tones of all, who felt that they were speaking in the antechamber of death, added to an unuttered feeling of horror. Two police constables had been sent for to keep watch during the night, and the large entrance hall had been prepared for the coroner's jury.

Little Alice Holland had gone early in the afternoon to the Mayor's house, with orders that preparations should be made for the reception of guests; and now that the first excitement was lessening, Mr. Jolliffe, "on hospitable thoughts intent," went about from one to the other, a little fussily, first inviting the coroner to consider his house as

his own, then asking Mr. Bosworth and Dr. Smart to meet Dr. Twyford at dinner. The invitations were at once accepted, as no one played the part of *Amphitryon* better than the genial Mayor; and even on a melancholy occasion like the present, excitement would not satisfy hunger, and except a glass of wine (taken sadly enough with the thought that it had been brought out by the dead for one probably dead) they had had nothing since the early morning.

Mr. Jolliffe was about to extend his invitation to the detective, when the inspector, possibly observing his momentary hesitation, anticipated him, by saying that he would take care of himself, as he had a good deal to do in the way of complete investigation before he could leave the house, and asked to be shown the room in which Captain Denison had slept. Mr. Jolliffe, who had kept the key in his own possession, took a light, and prepared to lead the way; but before doing so he repeated the question which he had already asked with reference to Bazi Bazoum. To his surprise, instead of returning the uncertain answer which he had previously given, the detective replied,

"Having carefully considered the evidence of Andrew Mathieson, I have no doubt of the innocence of this ventriloquist."

"Why, what do you gather from that evidence?" asked the Mayor, with extreme surprise. "What new light has he thrown on the matter?"

"You must not fail to mark," replied Inspector Stratton, "how, step by step, we are led to an irresistible conclusion. First of all, Andrew Mathieson brings Captain Denison to the gate of this house, soon after the little girl had quitted it. Then, as I said before, John Armstrong himself opened the gate, so at that time he could not have been murdered. The preparations for supper must have taken some little time, and Captain Denison could not have gone to his room before half-past ten or eleven o'clock. Now the ventriloquist, by the evidence of Edward Saunders, had left the park some two hours earlier; how then could he have got into the house, when you and Mr. Bosworth both testify to the fact that all the doors were fastened? Again, you must remember that John Armstrong and his daughter were not alone in the house. Think for a moment of the awful noise

that the murderer must have made in chopping to pieces those cupboards and chests. Would not such a noise have certainly awakened Captain Denison?"

"Well," replied the Mayor, "but who says it did not waken him?"

"If your worship wishes me to make that admission, I will certainly make it; but what then? where is he? what has become of him?"

"I agree with you there, Mr. Inspector, that is the grand difficulty. If we could only find Arthur Denison, we should get some clue to the mystery. Doubtless the murderer killed him after he had disposed of the father and daughter."

"But still, sir, I must repeat my question, where is the body?"

"I suppose it is hidden away somewhere," was the reply.

"Impossible, sir. I assert that Arthur Denison is alive."

Here Mr. Bosworth interposed, "And what then, Inspector?"

"Why, sir, I believe—" began the detective earnestly; then checking himself, he added, in a hoarse voice, "Don't ask me what I believe. I hardly dare express, even to myself, the suspicion I entertain."

After a short silence Mr. Bosworth resumed,

"But it is absolutely necessary that you should speak out plainly. Whom do you accuse?"

"I accuse no one," replied the detective; "it is the evidence which makes the accusation, and seems one moment to whisper in my ear, and the next to make the house ring again with the cry, 'The assassin is none other than—Arthur Denison!'"

If a hand grenade had suddenly fallen in the midst of the little party, they could scarcely have been more startled.

"Absurd!" cried the Mayor.

"Out of all reason!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"Absurd and unreasonable!" repeated the detective.

"Why so?"

"To suspect the nephew of a millionaire to be guilty of an assassination!" persisted the lawyer.

"A young officer with such a future before him," continued the Mayor.

"I really think, Inspector Stratton," added the coroner,

"that you are making a mistake. Would you mind giving us your reasons for believing that Captain Denison committed this fearful crime?"

"I will give you one, which to my mind is more than sufficient, and that is his absence."

"But," answered Dr. Twyford, "we seem to be arguing in a circle, and always coming back to the point from which we started. We have already remarked the strange fact of his absence, but to my mind that *proves* nothing."

"Well, sir, if it proves nothing to you, it must be because you can account for it."

"No," was the answer; "that is just what I cannot do. It certainly is mysterious, but I do not see why on that account you should at once assume the guilt of this gentleman. It seems to me like jumping to a conclusion from very insufficient premises."

"Perhaps," said the inspector, "it would have been wiser if I had followed my first impulse, and not have spoken. But it is quite possible that before the night is over, I may have found some proof of guilt so overwhelmingly certain as to leave no room for doubt. I will now only repeat what gives me ground for suspicion, so strong that it approaches to absolute proof. It is proved that John Armstrong admitted Captain Denison into the house between eight and nine o'clock; all the doors are fastened; no one can enter; in the morning John Armstrong and his daughter are found murdered; Arthur Denison has disappeared. Draw your own conclusions."

No one seemed convinced by this reasoning, which after all was only inference, and yet they hardly cared to continue the discussion. The Mayor, however, wound it up by saying,

"Anyhow, you must grant, Mr. Inspector, that every crime has a motive, and the higher the social position of the criminal the stronger that motive must be. Here we have to deal with a young man of excellent antecedents, with equally good prospects; now what possible interest could it be to him to commit this double murder?"

"*Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*," murmured Dr. Twyford to himself.

"Will your worship allow me to reply to your question by

asking you another? Supposing that this Bazi Bazoum were the criminal, what would his motive have been?"

"Surely simple greed of gold; for you have already told us that poor John Armstrong evidently had charge of a considerable sum."

"Then why, sir," urged the detective—"why should not this same sum have tempted Arthur Denison?"

"Simply because one is a strolling player, probably without a shilling in the world, to whom a sum of one hundred or even two hundred pounds would appear absolute wealth; whereas the other is the nephew of an extremely rich man, and who would regard such a sum in a very different light."

"But, sir, may I ask you whether this nephew is himself rich?"

"Well, no," replied the Mayor; "I cannot say that he is; for Mr. Robinson made his own fortune; but he has adopted this young man, and I know that he makes him a very liberal allowance. He has always spoken of him to me in the highest terms. But," he continued, as if anxious to change the subject, "I forgot to tell you that I sent a telegram to Liverpool this morning to Mr. Robinson, urging his immediate attendance here, and I received an answer from his manager to say that he had been unexpectedly called abroad, and had not left any address."

"That is specially unfortunate just now," said the detective; "and adds a fresh complication to an already difficult case, but all the more reason for my losing no time in continuing my investigations. Should I make any important discovery, I will at once wait upon your worship, even at the risk of disturbing you. If not, I will get a bed at Woodville, and be in attendance the first thing in the morning. I must, however, ask the favour of your showing me the room in which Captain Denison is supposed to have slept last night."

"Oh yes," replied the Mayor; "I had almost forgotten that. I will leave the key with you, and if you will look in at my house you can report progress. You need not be afraid of disturbing me, as I shall wait for the return of the police officers from Dedworth, and they are sure to be late."

So saying he led the way to the red room, the door of which he opened, and placed the key in the inspector's

hand. He then entered the chamber, and lit the candle which stood on the table, at the same time casting a hasty glance around, as if he half-expected to see Arthur Denison come forward, and furnish some solution of this dreadful mystery.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT WORK.

THE detective being left alone at once proceeded to make a minute and careful inspection of the room. First he lit the candles, four in number, which were in a couple of ormolu branches on the chimney-piece, and then the two on the dressing-table; these, with the one which Mr. Jolliffe had lit, made quite an illumination in the room, and enabled him to see clearly every object in it.

He commenced his search by examining the bed, and turned down the upper sheet in order to see whether the bed had really been used. Of this there was no doubt.

"The villain!" he said to himself. "It is perfectly clear that I have to deal with no ordinary criminal. To think of the wretch actually going to bed when he must have been planning all the details of his crime. He must have nerves of iron."

The next act of the detective was to look closely at the candle which stood on the table by the side of the bed, which had just been lighted. Feeling sure that a whole candle had been supplied to the guest, he could form a pretty accurate judgment as to the length of time it had been burning, and this he calculated to have been about an hour and a half, thus confirming the conclusion which the surgeon had arrived at from the post-mortem examination, and fixing the time of the murder soon after midnight.

His attention was next drawn to some cigar ash in the little tray on the table, and he then examined the small decanter of brandy, of which about a quarter had been used, —neat, however; as the bottles of soda-water had not been uncorked. “Another proof,” thought the detective, “that an old hand has been at work here; he has taken enough to steady his nerves, not enough to upset them.”

In all this, however, Inspector Stratton had, like a careful general, only been surveying the outworks; the key of the position, as he knew very well, lay in the cigar-case, which he now seized with avidity, for he had learnt from Mr. Bosworth that it contained letters addressed to Captain Denison. Having noticed the monogram on the cover, he proceeded to open the case, but as he did so he could not forbear an exclamation of surprise at the fact that so compromising an article had been overlooked and left behind. He did not, however, wait to moralize on this fact, but at once emptied the side-pocket of its contents.

The letters, or rather envelopes, were three in number; all addressed to the same person, and in the same handwriting. The first had the Liverpool postmark of August 7th, and was directed to “Capt. A. Denison, 50th Hussars, Cairo, Egypt.” The letter enclosed ran as follows:

“LIVERPOOL,

“Tuesday, Aug. 7th, 1883.

“MY DEAR GEORGE,

“Your letter received this morning after so long a silence has made me feel very uneasy. I can see that you have something on your mind which is evidently troubling you, for you write in a most desponding tone—quite different from your usual light and, I may add, open-hearted style.

“It is this very reticence that makes me anxious. A father is the most natural, as well as the surest helper in all difficulty and trouble. You know how I have endeavoured to fill the place of your lamented parents, and how I have, from your childhood, regarded and treated you as my own son. Let me beg of you then, my dear boy, to open your heart to me unreservedly, with the assurance beforehand of sympathy and help to the utmost of my power. It is, however, possible that you may not like to put into writing all

that is on your mind, and so I am delighted to find that you intend shortly to apply for three months' leave, which of course will be granted you, after all you have gone through since you quitted England.

"You will hardly recognise your sister Maude. You left her a promising child, she is now a charming young woman, as accomplished as she is beautiful, while the goodness of her heart shows itself in every action. She is on the point of leaving her school in Paris, and on my next visit there, in about a month, I shall bring her back with me to be in readiness to receive you.

"You may remember my telling you some time ago that I had purchased a small property in the New Forest, the chief attraction of which was an old Manor House, which I have not altered in any way, having bought the furniture, etc., which has been there for many generations. I have, however, added all that was necessary to make it comfortable, and have placed in it an old sailor and his daughter, who keep everything in excellent order.

"I have just learnt that an adjoining property will shortly be in the market; this added to what I already possess will make the Woodville estate very complete. But before I come to a final decision, I am anxious to have your judgment, for you know how much I depend upon you in everything.

"I will not fail to let you know my plans, and I shall count the days till we meet.

"Your attached Uncle,

"G. ROBINSON.

"P.S.—I write by this post to my agent in Cairo, desiring him to honour your drafts up to £200, as no doubt you will have some little affairs to settle before leaving. How about the gold mine?"

"Well," said the inspector to himself, "to think that this worthy and kind-hearted man should have such a villain of a nephew! I do not, however, learn much except that Arthur Denison was coming to England. Let us see what this next letter says."

It was addressed as before to Capt. A. Denison, but directed "Poste Restante, Marseilles." Mr. Robinson had

evidently written one or two other letters to his nephew which were missing, but this was thus worded :

“LIVERPOOL,
“Sept. 20th.

“MY DEAR GEORGE,

“I gather from your last letter that you will reach Marseilles on the 24th inst., and I hope you will find this waiting for you. Immediately on arriving in London go to the Charing Cross Hotel, where you will find your sister and myself. I have arranged everything as in my last.

“Ever yours,
“G. R.”

“Not much information as yet,” murmured the inspector, with a sigh of disappointment; “perhaps I shall find it here.”

The third envelope had no stamp on it, but was addressed, “Capt. A. Denison, 50th Hussars, Charing Cross Hotel, to be given him *immediately* on his arrival;” but that was all, there was no letter enclosed, the envelope was empty.

Stratton could not restrain an imprecation. “Was ever luck so bad as mine? Clearly this letter was of consequence, or it would have been with the others. He may have given it to John Armstrong as a sort of credential; anyhow, I must do my best to find it.”

Accordingly he went down again to the poor murdered man’s room, and made the minutest inspection, but in vain. He found indeed the letter (of which mention has already been made) from Mr. Robinson to his steward, desiring him to make the necessary preparations for his nephew’s reception, and to give him all the information he might require.

These last words seemed to indicate that Captain Denison was to be put into possession of all details connected with the property to be bought, but it was hardly likely that he would have cared to enter upon them directly after his arrival, and even if he had done so no record remained.

Disappointed, but not disheartened, the inspector returned to the red room, in order to make a still closer search. Before long his eye caught sight of a twisted piece of paper which was lying by the side of the fireplace, having evi-

dently been thrown hastily down. He unfolded it carefully, and could hardly believe his senses when it proved to be the identical letter he was looking for. It could scarcely have been alight for a moment, as the flame had almost miraculously spared the writing, so that only a few unimportant words were wanting, which were easily supplied by the context.

The expression of the detective's face would have been a study to any one who could have seen it—interest changed to excitement, and when he had finished reading he broke out into a cry of triumph, extinguished all the candles, except the one he carried, waved the letter over his head, locked the bedroom door and ran down the staircase. He then called out to one of the policemen in charge to come and open the outer gate, and immediately rushed off to Woodville at his utmost speed.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE.

THE excitement of the day gave a melancholy zest to the Mayor's dinner-party, and as sorrow is proverbially dry, full justice was done to the bountiful provision made for the removal of this characteristic. The details of the tragedy were first given in answer to the eager inquiries of Mrs. and Miss Jolliffe (who had passed the day in an agony of suspense), and were then discussed in all their bearings, while conjectures were hazarded as to the likelihood of any important discovery being made that evening by Inspector Stratton at the Manor House.

The discussion was gradually dying away from want of fresh material, when a hurried knock was heard at the front door, and the inspector himself, without waiting to be announced, passed by the servant, and breathless from haste

and excitement rushed into the dining-room, the door of which was being opened by Mr. Jolliffe. It seemed hardly possible that this could be the detective officer lately so calm and impassive. Forgetting ceremony in his eagerness, he poured out for himself half a glass of water, which the hospitable Mayor at once filled up with wine, and then, as all present had risen, and were coming towards him, he gasped out, "Ah, sir," this to Mr. Jolliffe, "I told you I should soon have undoubted proof—of Arthur Denison's guilt. Well, I felt sure that this proof existed—that it could not escape me—and here it is."

So saying he threw down on the table the third, partly-burnt letter, which in his excitement he had never let out of his hand, and then resumed more quietly, "Yes, gentlemen, this is what *I* was looking for; this supplies the motive that *you* were looking for; and fully bears out what before was only conjecture. If you will kindly be seated, I will, with your permission, read you this correspondence, the importance of which it is impossible to over-estimate, but that you may rightly understand it, I must begin from the beginning."

He then took from the pocket-book the first and second letters, which he read out rather hastily. When he had finished there was an evident feeling of disappointment among the hearers, to which the Mayor, as spokesman, gave expression, saying,

"This does not seem to me very important. We knew already that this young officer was coming to Woodville, as John Armstrong had received a letter from Mr. Robinson desiring him to make the necessary preparations for his nephew's visit."

"Quite true, sir," replied the inspector; "these two letters by themselves are not of much consequence, but when you have heard the third, you will at once see its extreme importance. It runs thus :

"CHARING CROSS HOTEL,

"MY DEAR GEORGE,

"Sept. 25th.

"Burns says, 'the best laid schemes o' men and mice gang aft aglee.' So prepare yourself for a disappointment. Instead of meeting Maude and myself, as we had arranged,

you will only have this epistle—a very unsatisfactory substitute, but indeed it cannot be helped. I have just received a letter which obliges me to start *at once* for Paris, and then to go on to Brussels, and possibly even to Berlin. Your sister and her maid will go to Richmond till I return. I have engaged a room for you in this hotel, and you have *carte blanche* to order whatever you like.

“You will naturally want a day’s rest after your journey; and you may wish to run down and see your sister, whose address I enclose. Then if you can go to Woodville on Thursday morning you will do me a *very* great service. The 9 a.m. train from Waterloo is a good one, reaching Romsey at 10.55; there you will find some sort of conveyance to take you to the Manor House. I have written to my steward, John Armstrong, to make you as comfortable as he can. You will find Mr. Jolliffe, the Mayor of Woodville, an agreeable and hospitable man. There is some good shooting, so I hope you will not find time hang heavy on your hands.

“Now let me tell you how important it is that you should go down at once. Not long ago I went to Woodville, and took with me a sum of £12,000, partly in notes and partly in gold, which sum I intend to use for the purchase of the estate about which I wrote to you, and which I do *not* wish to pay into my banking account, as I will explain to you when we meet. I left it with John Armstrong, than whom an honester fellow does not breathe; but I feel uneasy at his having so large an amount in his charge. Two guardians are better than one, but my chief security lies in the fact that no one in the world suspects that my steward has so much money at the Manor House. This is the state of the case, but with you for my Cerberus, I shall sleep, as the French say, on either ear. Good-bye, my dear boy. I have no time for more, but I hope soon to see you, and have no doubt we shall enjoy ourselves all the more in looking back on this *contre-temps*.

“Your affectionate Uncle, •

“G. ROBINSON.”

When Stratton had concluded, a sort of stupefied silence fell on all present, which he broke by saying,

"Now, gentlemen, what do you think? Let me repeat Mr. Robinson's own words, 'No one in the world suspects that there is so much money at the Manor House.' Does not this explain everything? Poor John Armstrong and his daughter have lost their lives through this fatal letter. I think you will hardly blame me for my conviction that Arthur Denison is the murderer. Who else could have been? Everything points to him, and to him alone."

"Ah," groaned the Mayor, "I am afraid you're right. I cannot resist such evidence. Arthur Denison must be guilty. Poor, poor Mr. Robinson; what a fearful blow for him in his old age!"

The inspector seemed lost in thought for a few moments and then continued:

"There are two points in this case which I cannot understand: first, why he should have allowed Andrew Mathieson to conduct him to the very gate of the Manor House, and to have actually heard his name, when his only chance of escape was in being able to prove an *alibi*; and, again, why he did not destroy every atom of this third letter. I grant you he might have overlooked his cigar-case (though this seems strange in one who had the nerve he seems to have had), but this letter—one of such terrible importance, that it reads almost like a murderer's confession—that he should have lit his cigar with it, and then thrown it carelessly away, instead of burning every morsel of it, is, I confess, an act of such stupidity or madness as to be almost incredible. It is as if he had signed his own death-warrant. If I had not seen it with my own eyes, I would not have believed it."

"Another instance," said Dr. Twyford, "of '*quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*'"

This was said to Mr. Bosworth, and the detective continued:

"However, this simplifies matters wonderfully for us. Supposing no one had seen Arthur Denison come to the Manor House; supposing he had not forgotten his cigar-case; supposing this letter had been destroyed (and these are not unlikely suppositions); we might have committed some grievous mistake, and the real criminal might have never been suspected, and perhaps this Bazi Bazoum—"

"Ah, Bazi Bazoum," interrupted the Mayor; "I do not like to say decidedly that he is guilty, but he has not yet been proved innocent. If he did not actually commit the murder, he may have been an accomplice."

"What! an accomplice of Arthur Denison," exclaimed the inspector, in a tone of surprise.

"Why not?" rejoined the Mayor; "he may have been reconnoitring in the park on his own account, when Edward Saunders surprised him jumping down from the wall; then he may have returned and found Denison in the chamber of horror; and even if he had no share in the deed of blood, he may have had a share of the money as a bribe for silence. But with such a start as he has, I fear we shall have some difficulty in apprehending him."

The inspector made no reply, as he saw that further argument would be useless; and, moreover, having proved the accuracy of his judgment in one case, he would not run the risk of failure in another; but he kept his former opinion unaltered. After some further conversation he retired, promising to be at the Manor House early next morning.

The rest of the party remained, awaiting the return of the superintendent from Dedworth. He arrived, as we know, shortly before midnight, and went at once to the Mayor's house to report progress.

"Well," said Mr. Jolliffe, as he entered, "what news?"

"I have carried out your orders, sir, to the letter. We waited till the end of the performance before making the arrest, and the prisoner is now safely lodged in the lock-up."

"Did he make any resistance?" asked Mr. Jolliffe.

"Not the least, sir. He came as quiet as a lamb. Certainly he seemed very much cast down, but that was only natural. It appears he has been a soldier and has served, so he says, in India and in Egypt. He is very anxious to be brought before your worship, though strange to say he never asked to see the warrant. By a word or two he let slip, it seemed as if he had been up to something; but of course I cautioned him that anything he might say would be reported."

"Quite right, superintendent. I will have him up before

me to-morrow morning at the Manor House, so that he may be on the spot for the coroner's inquest. Now," continued the hospitable Mayor, "you must want something after this long and tiring day. We shall look for you punctually at nine to-morrow morning, and see that the prisoner does not exchange a word with any one but yourself."

Thus ended one of the most eventful days ever known in Woodville.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNDER EXAMINATION.

BAZI BAZOUM passed a very uneasy night in the lock-up. Sleep was out of the question, but its place was taken by what doctors call "insomnia," a wretched state of neither waking nor sleeping. "What did it all mean? What had he done to be subject to such treatment? And the degradation of being handcuffed, which he had so narrowly escaped. And then to be locked and barred in! Good God! what had he done? Just because he had been seen getting over a wall, was he to be treated like a felon? Ah, what did the warrant say? Why had he not asked to see it? And then to have this happen at Woodville of all places in the world! What ill-luck had ever brought him there!" So it went on, again and again and again. There seemed to be only one groove, and all his thoughts ran in it. At last the morning dawned, hope seemed to come with it. About seven o'clock a policeman brought him in a cup of hot coffee and a slice of bread and butter, and at the same time spoke a kindly word, telling him to be ready in about an hour to go before the magistrate.

The hour seemed a very long one, but it had only sixty minutes, and they were scarcely exceeded when the superintendent, accompanied by two constables, entered the cell,

and called out sharply, but not roughly (no one knows the gamut of tone better than a police officer, and no instrument is so responsive as the sharp strung heart of a prisoner), "Now, my man, come into the yard for a wash, and then we must be on our way to the Manor House."

"To where did you say?" asked Bazi Bazoum, in a faltering tone; "does not the magistrate live here in Woodville?"

"You'll soon know all about it," was the reply. "Perhaps I am exceeding my instructions, but as I wish to spare you as much as possible, you can come with us in a cab, only remember what I said to you last night, that if you make the slightest attempt to escape it will be the worse for you; though indeed you must see for yourself that it would be madness to attempt anything of the kind."

"What should I want to escape for?" said Bazi Bazoum; "any one would suppose I was a murderer or some desperate character. (Here the superintendent exchanged a quick and meaning glance with his subordinates.) Will you let me see the warrant? surely I have a right to know what I am accused of."

"I would have shown it you last night if you had asked me," replied the superintendent; "but I cannot wait any longer now, you shall see it as soon as we reach the Manor House; so come at once."

The secret of Bazi Bazoum's arrest had been carefully kept, so that there were only a few idlers round the door of the police-station when the cab drove up; but when he came out, attended by his little body-guard of police constables, the news spread quickly, and although no time was lost on the road, the gates of the Manor House had scarcely been closed after admitting the cab, when they were besieged by a curious and excited crowd, who remained there during the greater part of the day.

The prisoner was evidently expected, for on the flight of steps before the hall door stood Inspector Stratton, who greeted the superintendent and regarded Bazi Bazoum with some curiosity. They entered the house together.

After a minute's conversation with the inspector in a low tone of voice, the superintendent dismissed the two constables who had been on watch all night, sent one of

those who had just accompanied him from Woodville to do duty at the entrance gate, and desired the other to keep close watch over Bazi Bazoum. The unfortunate ventriloquist could contain himself no longer, but broke out passionately desiring to see the warrant for his arrest, the reading of which increased instead of diminishing his agitation.

"For God's sake," he cried, "tell me the meaning of all this. I am quite willing to own that I was in the park on Wednesday evening, but I will give a full explanation to the magistrate, and after all it is not a very heinous crime. But every one seems to look at me as if I had done something very dreadful. What are these policemen here for? What am I suspected of? John Armstrong is no friend of mine, but call him, and I am sure he will say a good word for me."

All present interchanged looks of stupefied amazement, and could hardly have refrained from giving some expression to their astonishment, had not the door been opened at this moment, and the Mayor entered, followed by Mr. Bosworth and the coroner. Bazi Bazoum started up so vehemently that the policeman laid hold of his arm rather roughly; but without paying any attention to him, the ventriloquist addressed Mr. Jolliffe in an excited manner,

"What have I done, sir? what have I done that I should be treated in this way? I have been shamefully arrested, and locked up all night, merely because I was seen coming out of the park here on Wednesday evening. I have been brought up to respect the law, but I think, sir, you have been very hard on me."

"I will attend to you directly, my man," replied the Mayor, with some dignity. "You may depend upon justice being done you, but you will gain nothing by undue excitement."

He then turned to Inspector Stratton, and taking him aside, said, "I suppose nothing has transpired since last night?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," was the reply; "I sent a telegram the first thing this morning to the Charing Cross Hotel, in your name, so as not to excite suspicion, as I am pretty well known in London, and asked for information

about Captain Denison. I was quite prepared for the answer which has just been returned. By it I learn that he arrived from Paris on Tuesday about 6 p.m., that he received a letter which had been left for him, went out almost immediately, and has not come back. His luggage is still there, and they feel very uneasy. I have also telegraphed to one of my subordinates to keep a close watch on the hotel, and to let me hear at once if anything transpires; but as soon as the inquest is over, I propose going up myself; this case is so important that I do not care to entrust it to any other hands than my own."

"I think you have acted quite rightly," said the Mayor; "let us now see what this ventriloquist has to say for himself. His appearance is so far in his favour."

Bazi Bazoum had succeeded to a certain extent in mastering his excitement, but his nervous agitation showed itself still by the working of his features, and the convulsive movement of his hands. He stood at the end of the long table, at the head of which the Mayor took his seat, with Mr. Bosworth on one side, and his clerk on the other. The rest of the party stood in a little group behind. Mr. Jolliffe thus addressed the ventriloquist,

"I think it my duty to tell you that the charge which appears on the warrant issued for your apprehension forms part of another, and of a much more serious nature, as you will shortly learn. It will depend greatly on your answers whether this second charge is entered against you. I shall ask you certain questions of a formal character, to which I hope for your own sake you will reply truly and straightforwardly. You are not obliged to make any statement that may criminate yourself, and I shall give full weight to anything that you may wish to say by way of establishing your innocence; but I must repeat, especially as you have no legal adviser, that you cannot be too careful in your statements, as everything will be taken down. Now, in the first place, what is your real name?"

"Archibald Campbell, sir."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Where were you born?"

"In Liverpool, sir."

"Have you any relations there?"

"No, sir; I never knew my father. I was an only child, and my mother died when I was about twelve years old."

"And what is your profession?"

The ventriloquist hesitated a moment, and blushed as he answered,

"Well, sir, for the last few months I have been attached to the troupe of Joseph Grimshaw, who goes about the country with a caravan, but I have only a weekly engagement; before that I was a soldier."

"Ah, the superintendent informed me that you voluntarily told him that you had been in the army; that you had a military medal with a clasp, and that you had served in India and Egypt. Is all this true?"

"Perfectly true, sir; and in my box at Dedworth I have all my papers, and a second medal for service in India. I was wounded in action in Egypt, and got my discharge in consequence. More than that, I have a distinguished conduct medal."

"What regiment did you serve in?"

"In the 50th Hussars, sir."

The Mayor interchanged a sharp look with Mr. Bosworth, and continued his questioning with fresh interest.

"You say you have a distinguished conduct medal. Why was it given you?"

"For saving the life of my captain, sir, at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir; and it was from no fault of his that I did not have the Victoria Cross."

"And what was your captain's name?"

"Captain Denison, sir. Yes, it is very strange that this house should belong to his uncle, whom I have so often heard him talk about."

A sort of electric shock ran through those present at this answer. There was no doubt then that the theory of the Mayor that the ventriloquist was connected with Arthur Denison, and that they both had been concerned in this dreadful crime, seemed likely to come true. He turned and looked with significance at Inspector Stratton, who evidently felt the full force of the admission just made, while the superintendent felt a sort of regret that he had not put the handcuffs on a prisoner whose guilt seemed on the point of

being established. But no one spoke, and the Mayor continued with increased gravity,

"I am bound to repeat the warning I gave you just now, and to put you on your guard as to what you may say, since the case is now assuming a very serious aspect."

"Indeed, sir," replied the ventriloquist earnestly, "I thank you for your warning; but it is needless, as I am perfectly innocent of anything beyond a misdemeanour, which I shall have no difficulty in explaining; and further, I am ready to reply frankly to any question you may wish to ask me."

The evident air of truth with which these words were spoken, produced for the time a favourable impression; and after a short pause the magistrate continued:

"So you tell me that you saved Captain Denison's life. I suppose he was grateful to you?"

"Grateful, sir! There is not a man in the world like him! He used to come and see me in hospital three times a day. He seemed as if he could not do enough for me, and actually persuaded his uncle to place £100 to my credit in a Savings Bank. I should never have quitted the regiment if the doctor had not insisted on my doing so, since my wounds disabled me from active service. I had reached the rank of sergeant."

"How long is it since you were discharged?"

"About eight months, sir."

"And how long since you last saw Captain Denison?"

"Why, sir, when I left Egypt, as I have just said, eight months ago."

"Have you had no communication with him since?"

"None whatever, sir, as I did not wish him to know what I was doing."

"By the way, how did you come by your extraordinary name?"

"Well, sir, the fact is, that in my profession as a ventriloquist, it is necessary to be known by some unusual and high-sounding title. So as I had heard a good deal in the East about the Bashi-Bazouks, I made up a name something like theirs, specially as I did not care to be known by my rightful name; and I question very much if there is

any one in the company, except Joseph Grimshaw himself, who knows what my name really is."

"I do not like a man being ashamed of his own name," said the Mayor; "but you are not obliged to commit yourself by any further explanation."

"I think, if your worship would allow me," said the ventriloquist, "it would save some trouble, and might be more satisfactory, if I told you the story of my life; for, indeed, I have nothing to conceal, and I am not aware that I have done anything to be ashamed of."

Inspector Stratton here moved forward, and looked at the Mayor with a more satisfied expression, as he began to think that, after all, his belief in the prisoner's innocence might be justified by circumstances.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE.

THE ventriloquist continued:

"I was born, as I said, in Liverpool; and there I spent the greater part of my life. My mother was extremely poor, and earned what she could by going out charing. As there was no school-board then, I was allowed to do pretty much as I liked, though I managed somehow to learn to read and write. I hung about the quays, and picked up a living in the best way I could, and turned my hand to anything. I showed strangers over the town; I carried light baggage to the stations; I was employed as an extra hand at the hotels when they were full; I sold dogs and parrots on commission. As I grew older, I helped to unload the ships; and of an evening I used to amuse the sailors in the public-houses by my tricks as a ventriloquist, which came to me naturally, I hardly know when."

"Well," said the Mayor, "you seem to have been a rolling-stone; and, if the truth were known, no doubt you were often in trouble."

"No, indeed, sir, for nothing more than boyish scrapes, though I must own that I did not care to settle down to regular work. After my mother's death I moved into another part of the town, and became acquainted with an old sailor and his little daughter, who lived in the same street."

Here the ventriloquist made a sort of embarrassed pause, and Mr. Jolliffe said,

"I have seen no reason as yet to repeat my warning, but be careful."

"I have nothing to conceal, only—no doubt you are aware that John Armstrong, Mr. Robinson's steward, has been in the merchant service, and I feel a little awkward in speaking about him when he is not here, though I am quite sure he would confirm all I am saying."

"If this is acting," whispered the Mayor to Inspector Stratton, "it is very wonderful. It may be innocence, but, I confess, it makes me shudder."

"Well, sir, not to weary you, as time went on, and Mary Armstrong grew older, I could not help falling in love with her. She always treated me kindly, but yet kept me at a distance; and when, after a long, long time, I spoke to her father, he flew into a fearful rage, and told me at once to give up all thought of making Mary my wife, as I had no means of keeping her properly, that the half-idle, loafing life I was leading was not to my credit, and went on till I got wild, and left him, but more determined than ever to have Mary. I enlisted in the hope of rising in my profession, and the thought of her often used to steady me, and on her account I felt very proud when I was promoted to be sergeant. As soon as I returned to England I hurried down to Liverpool, but to my great disappointment could hear nothing of John Armstrong or his daughter. I learnt, indeed, that soon after my departure for India, he had again gone to sea, and had left Mary with her grandparents, who had a small farm in Cheshire. I went there, but the old people would not give me any information, merely saying that the Armstrongs had left

Liverpool for a distant part of England, and wished to have no communication with me. I was almost broken-hearted, and then it was that I joined Joseph Grimshaw's strolling company, as it seemed possible that by thus travelling about I might find the Armstrongs again. We came to Woodville, as you know, sir, last Monday, and by your permission gave two performances. On Tuesday evening, not long after I had come on the stage, my eye fell on Mary Armstrong, who was sitting in one of the front rows. She was looking at me with some uncertainty, as I was a good deal changed since I last saw her, and, besides, was wearing an unusual dress, and was not speaking in my natural tone of voice. But I knew her in an instant, and when I caught her eye she turned pale, and seemed about to faint. For my part I felt so overcome at this unexpected meeting, that I could not give my attention to the performance. I let the little doll fall from my hand, and the manager came forward to see if I was ill. I made an effort to recover myself, and concluded what I had to do as soon as I could. Behind the scenes I kept my eye on Mary, and when she moved to go out—which she did before long—I slipped on a cloak, to hide my costume, and followed her. She had a little girl with her, and when she heard my footsteps she hurried on; but I soon overtook her, and begged her to let me speak a few words with her. She did not seem very willing, but at last she sent the little girl on before, and spoke to me rather sharply. I suppose your worship hardly wishes me to repeat all that passed between us, but she told me that her father had not changed his feelings with regard to me, and that this masquerading, as she called it, was not at all creditable to me. I replied with some warmth that I had done nothing to disgrace myself, and went on to tell her how well I had got on in the army, and that I had a distinguished conduct medal for having saved my captain's life, little thinking then that his uncle, Mr. Robinson, of whom I had often heard him speak, was the owner of this place."

"Stay a moment," interrupted the Mayor; "all that you have said as yet agrees with what I have been told by the little girl who accompanied Mary Armstrong, but I now wish to ask you a question which you are not bound

to answer. When and where did you hear that this Manor House belonged to Mr. Robinson?"

"There is no reason in the world, sir, that I know of why I should not tell you. I naturally made inquiries in Woodville, being anxious to learn all I could about the Armstrongs, and it was in order to make the most of what I had learnt that I returned here on Wednesday evening."

"Well," said Mr. Jolliffe, "continue your story, and let us have, if possible, such an account of your proceedings as will exonerate you from the suspicion you are under at present."

"Willingly, sir," said the ventriloquist, "though I have not much more to tell. I finished what I had to say to Mary Armstrong by letting her know that my engagement with the troupe was only a weekly one, and now that I had found her I should throw it up. She pretended still to be angry, and told me to be off, but I don't think she really meant it. I believe it was more on account of the little girl being there. Anyhow I turned back, and my heart was full, with the thought of having found her, and I didn't mind her rough words one bit."

CHAPTER XX.

MYSTIFICATION.

"THE caravan left Woodville for Dedworth on Wednesday morning, but not until I had learnt pretty nearly all I wished to know. As soon as we had got everything in order at Dedworth, which was not till the evening, I went to the Red Deer, and asked if I could have some sort of conveyance to take me over to Woodville. The landlord, Mr. Purkiss, came out, and wanted to know how long I

wished to stay there. I told him about an hour or so. 'Oh, then,' he said, 'I think I can give you a seat in my dog-cart. If you wish to go alone, I shall charge you ten shillings; if you come with me, half-a-crown will make us straight—but I must be off in ten minutes.' As you may suppose I was glad enough of the chance, and we reached the cross-roads, a quarter of a mile from here, as near as I could guess about eight o'clock. It was getting quite dark when I got here, but I could manage to see my way, and clambered easily enough over the iron gates. I made my way up to the house, and as the shutters were not closed, I could look through the window into the kitchen, and saw John and Mary Armstrong finishing their supper. He seemed tired, and she was amusing herself by throwing pieces of bread to a large mastiff lying on the floor. I waited as patiently as I could, in hopes that John Armstrong would go round the premises to see that all was safe, and then I could slip in, and have a chat with Mary. I was quite prepared to face the old man, now that I knew in whose service he was, and that I had saved the life of his master's nephew. Indeed, I began to wish that I had gone boldly up to the front door in the first instance. Just as I was doubting what to do, as the time was passing away, all of a sudden the great bell at the entrance gate gave a sharp, loud peal, dring, dring, dring! The dog leapt up and began to bark wildly. Mary seemed to be asking her father who it could be at that time of night, while the old man busied himself in getting down a lantern and lighting it, and called the dog to follow him. I said to myself, 'If John Armstrong finds me here in the dark, like a burglar, and that brute of a dog flies at me, what sort of a figure shall I cut when I tell him that I have come back as a suitor for Mary's hand?' I can assure your worship, as a soldier who never knew what fear meant in action, my heart failed me, and I ran off as fast as my legs would carry me."

"Ah," said Dr. Twyford, who seemed waiting, like the Greek chorus, to come in with an appropriate platitude, "conscience doth make cowards of us all."

"Well, sir," continued the ventriloquist, not heeding the interruption, or, more properly speaking, the interjection,

"I hurried away at my utmost speed. The dog tore out, barking furiously. I really do not know whether he was following up my scent or not, but I thought he was, and rushing headlong forwards I ran against the trunk of a tree. Stunned for the moment, I found it a means of escape. Clambering up a tree came as natural to me as swarming up a mast in my old Liverpool days, but I had not very far to climb, for I found that this chestnut tree overhung the park wall, and all I had to do was to drop down into the road. I did so at once, but to my surprise at the foot of the wall I almost fell upon a man, who was striking a light for his pipe. He was as much startled as I was, but I did not give him time to recover himself, but hurried off as fast as I could. I suppose, however, he must have recognised me, and must have given information to the police, on the strength of which your worship has issued your warrant. But I finish as I began by saying that I think I have been very hardly used, and, as I have now told you the whole truth, I hope that I may be allowed to return to Dedworth, without any stain on my character, though indeed, as yet, I hardly know what I am accused of."

"Wait a little, if you please," replied the Mayor; "you have given me, with what I must own seems an air of truthfulness, an account of your actions on Wednesday evening up to the time of your leaving the park. If you wish to clear yourself entirely, and choose on your own responsibility to continue that account, you can do so; but you are not obliged to criminate yourself."

"Will your worship pardon me, if I say that you seem to be accusing me of something, or rather hinting at something, from which I cannot free myself, because I do not know what it is."

"I think," replied Mr. Jolliffe, "that I cannot do better than let you take your own way. So I shall not interrupt you again."

"Thank you, sir," said the ventriloquist; "I shall very soon bring my tale to an end. After jumping down from the wall, I ran on as fast as I could to the cross-roads, which was the place of meeting I had agreed on with my landlord. But I had to cool my heels there for a while. I heard nine o'clock strike by Woodville church clock, and then I dare

say it was a good half-hour before old Mr. Purkiss came up. I think he'd been enjoying himself at the White Hart; but whether or no, it was a good thing for him that he gave me the lift he did."

"Why so?" asked the Mayor.

"Why, sir, because we hadn't gone more than a mile from the cross-roads, when all at once—perhaps it was the driver's fault, perhaps it was the horse's fault. I suppose it would depend on who tried the case—a jury of horses or of men, as to how that was decided."

The ventriloquist, forgetting his situation at the moment, said this with a smile on his lips, but the smile died quickly away when he remarked the strange, almost horrified look with which all present regarded him.

"I beg pardon, sir," he continued, feeling that he had, without knowing it, made a mistake; "but the horse started at something, rushed at a milestone, and then the dog-cart and ourselves had a bad time of it. Luckily we had not much to complain of beyond the upset, but the trap was done for. The horse was not hurt, and we soon set him free by cutting the traces. One of the lamps was alight, and we soon relit the other; so things might have been worse. We dragged our vehicle inside the nearest field, and set off home, leading the animal who had done the mischief. As I said to the landlord, we were like Mr. Pickwick on his first visit to Dingley Dell."

It would be difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to reproduce, by any amount of word-painting, the fearful shrinking, we might say flesh-creeping sensation that seemed almost to freeze the life blood of those who were listening to this man's words. There in the next room but one—good heavens, only to think of it!—lay the stiff, stark bodies of two murdered human beings, and here was this man, this actor, this possible murderer, making little jokes to raise a smile. It could only be entire innocence, or guilt so steeped in guilt as to have forgotten, in acting, what guilt really was. Anyhow the state of things was simply and absolutely frightful. The ventriloquist felt that he was in some way damaging his case, and concluded hastily,

"I must really beg your pardon, sir, for my freedom. I was only thinking for the moment of my talk with Mr.

Purkiss, and I fear I may have been wanting in respect to your worship, than which nothing could have been further from my thoughts. We had a very weary walk of it into Dedworth, and it was long past midnight when we reached the Red Deer. I have now only to say, sir, that if you will send for Mr. Purkiss he will confirm every word I have uttered; and if you will also ask Mary Armstrong to come in, she will assure you that I have only spoken the truth about all that passed between us on Tuesday evening."

What, again! The horror of the situation was so overwhelming, that all present held their breath. Here was a man fussing and fuming at his supposed harsh treatment for a venial, or at any rate unproved offence, while the victims of a fearful tragedy, lying dead and cold, only a few feet away, were crying to heaven for vengeance, like Abel weltering in his innocent blood; while he, this man, the acknowledged friend of the presumed murderer—Inspector Stratton, who had been concerned in so many criminal cases, felt his blood curdle. The poor Mayor could no longer contain himself, but gave way to a half-suppressed groan at what we must call the unexpectedness of the situation.

We should leave the picture incomplete if we omitted the figure of the ventriloquist. He had marked with increasing anxiety a mist, and then a darkening cloud, which seemed to be surrounding him. His tale was evidently received with suspicion, but being true he could easily prove it; still there was a doubt, an uncertainty which he could not understand. And this brooding, indefinite fear hung like a pall over every word spoken. Then came a silence that might be felt.

It is not comparing great things with small, but rather comparing the grand working of Nature with the supreme action of the human heart, when we say that in this quiet hall of an English country house there was a pause like the lull before the eruption of some great volcano, or perhaps it more exactly resembled the outcome of one of those terrible Greek dramas, such as the *Cedipus* of Sophocles, or the *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus*, when the spectators must have held their breath waiting for the entrance of the unimpassioned chorus, who would bring, as it were, the telephoned

shrieks of the self-blinded king, or the raging of the maddened murderess.

Poor Mr. Jolliffe knew nothing of these ancient dramas, and it may be doubted whether Dr. Twyford was sufficiently calm and collected to recall them, but here was a scene as terrible as anything that could be conceived, carried out in the presence of these men, who shrank instinctively from what they knew must be its conclusion.

“O’er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted.”

CHAPTER XXI.

FACE TO FACE.

AFTER an interchange of looks with all present, which expressed this dumb feeling of horror, Mr. Jolliffe motioned to the ventriloquist to sit down, and then, as a sort of relief, turned to Superintendent Melville, and asked him what kind of character the landlord of the Red Deer at Dedworth bore in the neighbourhood.

“The very best possible, sir,” was the reply. “Your worship is no doubt aware that he belongs to the famous family of Purkisses, who have lived in the forest for hundreds and hundreds of years, ever since one of them took the body of the murdered Red King in his cart to Winchester. William Purkiss is not only a well-to-do man in his business, but he is thoroughly honest and upright, and I would take his word before any one’s for miles around.”

“In that, or indeed in any case,” replied Mr. Jolliffe, “you had better go over in your trap, and bring him here as soon as possible, that we may have his evidence one way or the other.”

So the superintendent started directly.

After a few minutes' whispered conversation, first with Inspector Stratton and then with the coroner, Mr. Jolliffe again addressed the ventriloquist, though with a certain hesitation.

"I am about," he said, "to take a step, which may be, and I believe is unusual, but so are the circumstances of the case. You have asked me several times, with a persistence, which I am willing to believe arises from innocence, what it is that you are really accused of; and you have rightly surmised that it must be something more serious than what appears on the warrant; so serious, indeed, as to be a matter of life or death. (The ventriloquist here started and changed colour.) You will soon have to appear before this gentleman (turning to the coroner), and I am only anticipating by a short time what you must then know. If you are guilty, the marvellous self-command which has been such a trial for us to have witnessed, may enable you to pass the ordeal; while, on the other hand, if you are innocent, as I hope you are, I shall feel that I am justified in putting you to this test. Now, come with me."

The Mayor, followed by the prisoner, in charge of the policeman, then led the way into the laundry. Anticipation had not exaggerated the actuality of what now took place. Two small iron bedsteads had been found somewhere in the house, brought down, and placed against the wall. On them, covered by a sheet, lay the lifeless bodies of John Armstrong and his unfortunate daughter. As the window shutters were closed, the room was almost in darkness, but the light from the opened door was sufficient to show dimly *what* was lying there. Mr. Jolliffe, with a trembling hand, uncovered the face of poor Mary Armstrong, and then what followed could neither be described nor forgotten. "Thunder-struck" is a word often used, seldom realized, but any one looking on the face of the ventriloquist might have learnt how the lightning flash leaves its impress where it falls. It was the electric photograph of an indescribable agony. All the blood in his body rushed at once to his face, and then retiring left it perfectly livid. A groan, a cry, a dull utterance from his throat died away in a hoarse murmur, as if soul and body were being rent asunder; then, rushing

forwards, as his limbs gave way beneath him, he knelt or rather flung himself down by the bedside with an inarticulate moan, even deeper than the last.

To say that he was prostrated by the shock would very feebly express his condition. The revulsion of feeling was so sudden and terrible that it would have been no marvel if his reason had given way. This has happened before now even under a lesser strain. But the very sharpness of his agony saved him. He threw up his arms, and holding his head in his hands, as if to assure himself of the actuality of the situation, he cried, or rather shrieked out,

“What! John and Mary Armstrong dead, and murdered, murdered! So this is what I am charged with, is it?”

Then he broke into a fit of convulsive laughter, more terrible even than his first outcry. Nature was ebbing and flowing most fearfully in the poor fellow’s brain. Only those present could possibly have realized the horror of the scene. It would need Edgar Poe’s pen adequately to describe what took place, and even then he would only have been drawing on an excited imagination, whereas this man’s cries were piercing the very soul and marrow of those present.

He seized one of the hands of the poor girl, which was lying crossed on her breast, stiff and cold—oh! those poor fingers, which so lately could have expressed every feeling of the heart, now damp and irresponsive; oh, the pity of it! Then there came an outbreak of words (let us hope we may never hear the like), some resembling the throes of a poor creature in its death agony, others in the tenderest tones of a passionate love—it seemed marvellous that the human voice could give utterance to such sounds. Possibly (as the strangest instance of extremes meeting) those very tones which he was in the habit of using in the exercise of his profession to excite the feelings of his audience, now burst from his heart with involuntary, but overwhelming vehemence, the like of which had hardly ever been heard before.

“Mary, dear Mary! Have they killed you, and am I accused of your murder?—I, who loved and adored you beyond the power of words to express. Oh! Mary, my

darling, my own, my love, my hope, my all ! Wake, Mary, if you are asleep, come to life if you are dead. Oh, one word, Mary, one word. Tell me the name of your murderer, and then I care not what happens—but I cannot and will not let them say that *I* have killed you. No, no, ten thousand times no. Mary, dearest, have pity on me, and speak. O God, work a miracle and bring her to life ! But no, this is some frightful dream. Mary ! Mary ! !”

Then with a cry that burst from him, an ineffable groan from the depth of his soul, a cry that made every heart that heard it thrill and vibrate in responsive grief, he fell literally and absolutely in a heap on the floor, as if all power of will had left him, and as if his failing and lifeless limbs were merely the outward expression of the collapse of all mental power within. None could forget this scene of misery to their dying day. It was such a lifting of the veil between death and life, or rather such a cry of one seeking to pierce that veil, that this ordinary room seemed changed into an ante-chamber of what should come hereafter.

The entrance of Superintendent Melville acted as a kind of disenchanting shock to such a tension of the nerves as could not be borne much longer.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN ALIBI.

THE Mayor, followed by his friends, left the room noiselessly, but was utterly incapable of speaking. He motioned to Mr. Bosworth to take his place and ask the necessary questions, which he did accordingly, and began by expressing his surprise at the speedy return of the superintendent.

“Why, Melville,” he said, “what has brought you back so quickly ? Has anything fresh happened ?”

“No, sir,” replied the police officer ; “but I had scarcely

left Woodville when I met Mr. Purkiss driving in. It appears that the news of these dreadful murders had reached Dedworth; and as he naturally wished to know the truth, he was coming to inquire for himself; so I took him up into my trap, sent his on to Woodville, and now he is waiting your pleasure in the hall."

William Purkiss needed no bush to declare that the wine of his nature was good wine: he was an excellent type of the old-fashioned English country landlord, utterly unlike the modern hotel-keeper. He was of fair height, but not tall. His weather-beaten face resembled nothing so much as a Ribston-pippin. His hair was of the same tint as that of the Conqueror's son; but his blue Saxon eyes seemed incapable of being windows to a soul full of selfish cruelty. They rather told of a nature kind and pitiful, honest and straightforward, inviting sympathy and good fellowship. Nor did they express other than the truth. There was, however, an anxious look in them, as the news of the ventriloquist's arrest had been communicated to him by the superintendent, there being now no need for concealment.

He had often done business with Mr. Bosworth, and so felt at ease in answering his questions. He confirmed in every particular the account given by the ventriloquist, and proved an *alibi* to the entire satisfaction of all present. Inspector Stratton could not repress a smile of quiet triumph at this proof of the accuracy of his judgment; and the Mayor, who had now somewhat recovered his self-possession, frankly owned that he had yielded too hastily to first impressions, and added,

"I wish I could believe that we are equally wrong about Arthur Denison; but I fear that facts are too overwhelmingly strong against him. Let us, however, relieve this unhappy man from part of the trouble which has fallen so heavily upon him, though, of course, he must remain and give his evidence at the inquest."

They returned to the laundry, and though they had been absent some little time, they found the ventriloquist almost in the same position in which they had left him; the policeman in charge had revived him with a little water, but he still knelt by the bedside, with his head buried in his hands,

while the nervous trembling of his whole body showed that he continued to suffer intensely.

"Campbell," said the Mayor in a kindly voice, addressing him for the first time by his own name. The poor man turned round slowly and looked up. That half-hour of agony had left such fearful traces on his countenance that he was scarcely to be recognised. The burning tears that had been forced from him had furrowed his cheeks as if some corrosive liquid had poured down them; his forehead was contracted with pain; while his eyes, lately so bright and sparkling, were now dull and dead, with all their fire quenched, and all their expression gone.

"Campbell," repeated the Mayor, "we have seen and questioned Mr. Purkiss from Dedworth. He has confirmed your statement in every point, and I am glad to be able to say that your innocence is thoroughly established, and that you are now a free man."

The ventriloquist listened to the words spoken without seeming to take in their sense, or to understand that they were addressed to him; but gradually the sound entered his brain, and in a hoarse and broken voice, he said,

"Do I understand, then, that I am no longer suspected of having murdered John and Mary Armstrong?"

"On the contrary, your innocence has been completely proved."

"Then am I free again?"

"Certainly."

On this assurance the light returned slowly to the eyes of the unhappy man; it came and went again, and then when it finally settled after the uncertain flickering, the light was lurid, and the expression was cruel.

He rose, or rather staggered to his feet, turned to the dead bodies, and stretching out his right hand over them with an innate dignity, said,

"John and Mary Armstrong, you have been cruelly and foully murdered, and no power on earth can restore you to life again; but you can be *avenged*, and, with God's help, I will never cease till I have found your murderer, and brought him to justice, be he who he may."

"It is possible," said Inspector Stratton, "that you may render us most important service. We have strong proof

against some one; but you must try and recover yourself before we go further into the matter, as your nerves have already received a terrible shock."

"Thank you, sir, for your consideration; but I feel my strength returning to me, and the blood already tingling in my veins. I have now but one thought in my mind, and that an overpowering one of vengeance. Show me but the slightest trace you may have, and, like a bloodhound, I will hunt the assassin to his doom. Tell me, then, whom you suspect?"

"None other," was the answer, "than your late captain, Arthur Denison."

"I think, sir, you must be misled by circumstances, as you were in my case, and are on a false scent. I believe in Captain Denison's innocence as firmly as I do in my own; but if I am wrong, and you can prove to me,—*prove* to me, mind,—that he, for whom I had, ay, and still have, the greatest esteem and affection, that he is indeed the murderer of these poor creatures, then I swear to you that all my regard will be changed into imperishable hatred."

It was a cruel task which fell to the lot of the detective, to be obliged, first, to destroy the simple, affectionate trust which this man had in his late captain, and then to make use of him as an instrument of justice; but sentiment could not be considered, and the murderer must be tracked.

Step by step Inspector Stratton showed him the case, relentlessly giving proof of all that had taken place from the time that Andrew Mathieson had left Captain Denison at the gate of the Manor House, to the hour of the murders; and then, accumulating evidence of the forgotten pocket-book, with its gilt monogram (which the soldier had seen again and again in his officer's hand), he concluded by reading Mr. Robinson's letter to his nephew, in which he stated that no one else in the world had any knowledge of this sum of £12,000 deposited with the steward.

When all this had been brought before Archibald Campbell in such a manner as to leave no room for doubt, he said to the inspector, with a groan,

"Enough, and more than enough; he is a wretch and a villain. You may count on my doing all in my power to

help you to apprehend him ; but God help me in such a terrible task."

It is needless to recapitulate the evidence given at the inquest, as nothing new was brought forward. The coroner summed up with admirable clearness. The verdict was given at once, "Wilful murder against Arthur Denison, captain in the 50th Hussars."

Inspector Stratton, accompanied by Archibald Campbell, started for London by the next train, with a warrant for his arrest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN EGYPT.

IN a tale of this sort it is not easy to preserve the unities of the drama, which it may be remembered were defined by Mr. Curdle to Nicholas Nickleby as consisting "in a certain kind of dovetailedness with regard to place and time"; so that we shall hope to be forgiven if we transfer the scene of action from the New Forest to Egypt, and still more if so to say we put back the hands of the clock, and "Hibernice" make a fresh start before we begin.

On a spring evening in the year 1883, two young officers of the 50th Hussars were seated outside Shepherd's Hotel, at Cairo, enjoying their cigars and certain cooling drinks ; or, to be more correct, one of them was making the most of these creature comforts, while the other was smoking his cigar in so abstracted a manner, that every two or three minutes he had to stop and relight it.

"Come, Denison, old fellow, cheer up," said the younger of the two ; "what's the matter ? I don't think *you've* much to grizzle about."

"Well, perhaps not, as a general rule," was the reply

"but just now I'm up a tree, and it's about as high as a date-palm. I made a fool of myself last night over the cards with Hamilton of Ours, and I was obliged to give him an I.O.U. for a 'cool' hundred. Now my old uncle, as you know, keeps me pretty well afloat in money matters, but has a most special and particular horror of what he calls debts of dishonour. I too have an equal horror of the Jews who swarm here, so I hardly see my way out of the scrape. It seems such a deuced queer thing to ask a fellow to give you time to pay, and Hamilton has not the best temper in the world about such matters. I suppose you don't know any one who would help a lame or rather a limping dog over a stile?"

"Indeed, and I do," answered the other officer, whose name was O'Brien. "I was in a bit of a scrape myself a few weeks ago, and Mat Isaacson pulled me through. Still I should tell you that he's a queer customer, and does business in a queer fashion; just as it takes him. You can but try your luck. Here's his address, but I'd rather you didn't mention my name." Then the conversation drifted into another channel.

The next morning about ten o'clock, Captain Denison found himself knocking at the door of one of those villas near the Abdeen Palace at Cairo, which sprang up like mushrooms when Ishmail was Viceroy, combining Western requirements with Eastern possibilities. There was very little appearance of a house of business, and when the door was opened by a native woman, evidently on her way to market, it was with a certain hesitation that the officer asked whether Mr. Isaacson lived there, and whether he was at home. He was obliged to repeat his question in French, and then in broken Arabic, before he could get a reply, which was given more by sign than by sound; though the sight of a uniform seemed to be very fascinating.

On crossing the threshold, Captain Denison found himself in a quadrangle, round three sides of which ran a covered colonnade, with light pillars, painted in gay colours. A double row of trees on each side shaded the central path, and half-way to the house, which formed the fourth side of the court, was a fountain, which gave a cool and pleasant look to the whole place.

"Not a bad sort of location," said the officer to himself, as he looked round, waiting to be announced; but he found himself alone, as the cook, or housekeeper, or whatever her equivalent designation might be, evidently thought that she had done quite enough by admitting the visitor into the entrance court.

The situation was not altogether pleasant, but the officer walked boldly on. There was neither bell nor knocker at the door of the house, but after rapping two or three times, a small Arab boy appeared, grinning in Arab fashion, and, showing Captain Denison into a sort of entrance hall, disappeared without a word. There were several doors opening into this hall, each one covered by a *portière* of some heavy stuff, and through one of them came the sound of voices in sharp dispute. One was that of a female, trembling, imploring; the other that of a man, harsh, threatening: but beyond the tone, no words could be distinguished.

"So it seems I've come in for family jars," said the officer; "rather an unfortunate time for business, but I hardly know how I can beat a retreat."

At this moment the inner door was partly opened, for the following words were distinctly audible,

"Now, for the last time, will you go, as I order you?"

"No, you have no right to order me, and I will not go."

"Then so much the worse for you. Do you suppose that I shall allow all my plans to be thwarted, and myself to be made a fool of, because you choose to stand in your own light, as well as in mine. But mark my words, if I can't bend you, I'll break you."

Captain Denison felt himself in so false a position as an unwilling listener, that he rose from his seat, and had taken a few steps towards the door by which he had entered, when he was stopped half-way by a sight for which he certainly was not prepared. Instead of the middle-aged lady whom he had pictured to himself as Mr. Isaacson's wife, a young girl, of about eighteen years old, rushed impetuously into the room, which she had expected to find empty. Her confusion at finding herself suddenly in the presence of an English officer, can scarcely be described. It would be hard to say

which of the two was the more struck by the painfulness of the situation. The sight of a young and beautiful girl, in such evident distress, her blue eyes full of tears, even her hair in disorder, as if she had been passing her hands through it in her trouble, made the officer feel as if she were mutely appealing for help, which, from the strangeness of his position, he could not possibly give her. A few inarticulate words on either side were the only solution of the difficulty, and with one burning blush that instantly covered neck, cheeks and forehead, the poor girl ran out of the room in even greater trouble than she had entered it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. ISAACSON AT HOME.

PERHAPS Captain Denison was the more to be pitied when he found himself in the presence of the gentleman whom he had come to see. It was very evident that the dusky page had made no announcement of his arrival.

Mr. Isaacson certainly did not appear to advantage when he came into the hall by the same door which had been left open by the young lady. A stout and yet angular man, as vulgar and repulsive as she was refined and interesting, he showed all the traces of the storm of passion, which even yet was passing over him. A lowering forehead, grey eyes full of rage, a mouth,—ah, well; nothing less than an instantaneous photograph could depict the ferocious expression of the lips, which seemed as if they could scarcely contain an outburst of furious words. It would be difficult to say whether they were checked or encouraged by the sight of a stranger. He looked like a wild animal suddenly brought to bay.

“Pray, sir, who are you? and what do you want here?”

he stammered out in an angry tone, half suppressed in its utterance by the sight of the officer's uniform.

"I would apologise for my intrusion, sir, but I was shown into this room by your servant, who did not, I suppose, understand that I wished to see you on a matter of business. I am Captain Denison of the 50th Hussars;" at the same time presenting his card.

The word "business" seemed to have a magical effect in calming the storm, and with a strong and masterful effort, Mr. Isaacson replied,

"I am sorry, sir, that you were the involuntary witness of an unpleasant family scene, but the least said on either side the better. Now, may I ask whether your business is civil or military?"

It was like putting the Westinghouse brake on a train at full speed; the man clearly had great power of self-command, and could exercise it when he felt it to be his interest to do so.

"Well, sir," answered Captain Denison, "I should say it was *personal*. I find myself in some little difficulty from which I believe you can extricate me. I am in immediate want of £100, and circumstances into which I cannot very well enter, prevent me from applying to my agent. May I ask for your assistance?"

Mr. Isaacson appeared surprised, and said,

"I am not a money-lender, at least not to strangers or on so small a scale; but if you could give me good security, I would try to oblige you."

Captain Denison replied with some embarrassment, "It is just the want of security which causes my difficulty. I have a fair allowance from an uncle in England, but I cannot anticipate it, besides that I have only my pay and position."

"And may I ask whether you are your uncle's heir?"

"Not legally, but he has no children of his own, and I have no doubt that he will divide his fortune between my sister and myself; but indeed I must tell you frankly that this is a matter that has never entered my thoughts."

"No doubt, but we are talking business. So if you were to offend him, you would have no claim whatever upon him. I am afraid, sir, that under the circumstances I

cannot oblige you." Then, after a moment's pause, he continued, "Perhaps, however, you would not mind telling me the name of your uncle."

"With pleasure. He is Mr. George Robinson, of Liverpool."

"What!" asked Mr. Isaacson eagerly; "Mr. Robinson, the well-known merchant?"

"Yes," replied Captain Denison, with a smile at this sudden change of manner.

"Oh, then in that case, my dear sir, I shall be most happy to accommodate you. Your note of hand will be quite sufficient, and you can discharge this slight obligation when convenient."

Seeing the look of astonishment on the officer's face at this unexpected alteration, he continued,

"Of course, as a man of the world, you will understand that I expect some little return."

"Oh pray," interrupted Captain Denison, "do not suppose for a moment that I should object to your terms. I am well aware that you are doing this to serve me, and any interest—"

It was now Mr. Isaacson's turn to interrupt,

"Indeed, I could not think of such a thing. I am not, as I said before, a money-lender; but if you will allow me to do you this small service, I shall ask you to use your influence in a matter which I will explain to you when I have more leisure;" and with these words he left the room.

It was a day of surprises. Captain Denison was almost stupefied by his sudden and unexpected good fortune. The whole thing seemed like a chapter in the "*Arabian Nights*;" and he would hardly have been astonished if Haroun al Raschid had come into the room, or if, like Alnaschar, he had himself been indulging in a day-dream. Mr. Isaacson, however, very soon re-appeared, with some notes in his hand, which did *not* change into dried leaves when presented at the Bank.

"As a matter of form, Captain Denison," he said, "I will ask for your note of hand, but you need not be afraid that I shall trouble you about it. If you will come this evening and take a cup of coffee with me, we can then discuss the matter of business that I mentioned to you just now."

The officer could not well refuse, and the hope of seeing, under more favourable circumstances, the charming girl who had mutely, but powerfully, excited his pity, made him at once accept the invitation; and he began to ask himself whether his first impressions of a man who had treated him so generously, might not have been unjustly severe.

Captain Denison had ample opportunity of determining this before many weeks were over; but we can anticipate his conclusions by informing our readers that it would be hard to find any one more selfish or unscrupulous than Matthew Isaacson, though it was seldom that he allowed his passion to overcome him as it had done on this occasion; and he had his own reasons for desiring to stand well with this young officer. To trace all the crooked ways by which this man had arrived at his present state of prosperity would interfere too much with the progress of our tale. He will play an important part in what is to come. But a few words will be sufficient to explain his position in Egypt.

Business brought him to Cairo, not long after the close of the Franco-German War, and soon after his arrival he was applied to by an English lady, Mrs. Seymour, the widow of a gentleman of good family but small means, who had come to Egypt to look after an estate which had been left him. Poor Mr. Seymour had infinite difficulty in proving his title; he found it very like a chancery suit in England, and he had scarcely attained his object when he died, leaving his widow with a little girl, strangers in a strange land, with barely enough to live on.

The English consul, who had known and respected her husband, wishing to serve his widow, advised her to apply to Mr. Isaacson, whom he knew to be a clever man of business, and one likely to assist her in working her estate at Birket profitably.

Mr. Isaacson soon lost his head, and his heart (or what he was pleased to call his heart) to this simple-minded English lady, as he saw that her estate, carefully managed, would turn out a first-rate investment. From time to time he advanced money upon it himself, taking good care to secure these advances by mortgage. At last, when he

thought he could establish a claim to her gratitude (?) he proposed to marry her, and after some hesitation was accepted. Poor Mrs. Seymour's main object was to insure protection and a home for her little girl, which her own failing health warned her she might not be able to afford much longer.

It would scarcely be true to say that her union with Mr. Isaacson brought her much happiness, but as he was constantly absent, she lived almost as quietly as she had done before, and left the world with the hope that her child would have more enjoyment of life than she had found in it herself.

Mr. Isaacson had taken good care that by the marriage settlement he was to have all profit arising from the estate at Birket for his life-time, on his undertaking to provide for the education of Mabel Seymour, whose guardian he was appointed till she came of age. Further than that, by a strange oversight on her mother's part, no provision was made for her, so that she was entirely dependent on her step-father. She was placed by him at a fairly good school in a country town in England, leaving him for the most part in Egypt, where he materially improved his position, first under the Dual Control, and then as contractor to the English army of occupation. A few months before the date of our tale, he had brought his step-daughter from England to reside with him in Cairo, having matured a scheme by which he believed his interests would be materially advanced.

It must not be supposed that the unlovely appearance which this man made to Captain Denison, under the influence of overpowering rage, was his ordinary aspect. No, he preferred to play the rôle of Reynard to that of Isegrim; but when persistently thwarted in what he had set his mind on, the innate wolf broke out of the fox-skin covering, and showed an evil nature, scarcely restrained by the bonds of civilization.

CHAPTER XXV.

MABEL SEYMOUR.

THIS digression has been rather a long one, but it has been necessary, in order that the reader might be put in possession of the state of affairs when Arthur Denison and Mabel Seymour were so unceremoniously brought together. The young officer had plenty to occupy his thoughts during the day, as he dwelt, first on his own unexpected good fortune, then on the strange metamorphosis that had taken place in Mr. Isaacson; then last, but certainly not least, came admiring pity at the recollection of the young "Niobe, all in tears," which though so fleeting left a most vivid impression.

He was therefore not sorry to leave the Abasseah Barracks, and to find himself knocking at the outer door of Mr. Isaacson's house in the Abdeen road. It was opened by the same young Arab who had caused his discomfiture in the morning, and whose stereotyped grin would probably have gained him a box on the ears if he had not been on the safe side of the door.

But the visitor had evidently been expected: some coloured lamps were hung round the colonnade, and what in Europe would have had a sort of tea garden appearance, seemed quite natural in Cairo. A servant stood at the front door ready to announce him. Captain Denison, being so to say more than preoccupied, paid no particular attention to this man, and yet he thought he had seen him before. He was ushered, not as he had hoped into the drawing-room, but into another room opening out of the hall, where he found Mr. Isaacson expecting him, who came forward to greet him with rather effusive cordiality.

"It is very good of you, Captain Denison," he said, "to accept this off-hand invitation, but I hope now that you have found your way here you will often honour my poor house with your presence. I need hardly say that you will always bring your welcome with you. But I feel sure that

you will excuse me if I enter at once upon business. No doubt you were surprised this morning at what, in military phrase, I may call my sudden change of front. I will tell you frankly, it arose from my seeing that you could be of service to me, and I will now explain in what manner. Your uncle's name has long been familiar to me, and though I have never yet had any business relations with him, either here or in England, I shall be extremely glad, if, through you, I can induce him to join me in certain operations, which will tend to our mutual benefit. I am well acquainted with this country, and with the various ways by which money can be made; but capital is needed. A gentleman living here is willing and ready to join me, but I want some one in England, of Mr. Robinson's standing, to be associated with us, in order to carry out my ideas. Before going any further, may I ask you whether you see your way towards influencing your uncle in this direction?"

As a matter of fact, Arthur Denison knew nothing whatever of his uncle's affairs, except that he had the reputation of being very rich, and had given ample proof of it by the unfailing generosity which he had always shown to his nephew; so that it was easy to give a general assurance of doing what he could.

"And without delay, my dear sir, without delay," continued Matthew Isaacson eagerly; "for I will now place full confidence in you, and inform you that my chief reason for wanting money is to work a gold mine on my estate at Birket. Do not be surprised, and fancy that I am some wild visionary; or that because you never heard of gold being found in this country, that therefore none exists. It was quite by accident that I noticed some glittering particles in the sand of a little brook which comes down from the hills, and, after passing through my estate, falls into the Nile near El Ouan. I carefully separated these particles from the sand, and showed them to a jeweller in this city. He assured me that they were gold, of the best and purest quality. But you must come over to Birket before long and judge for yourself. Now let us leave business and see whether my step-daughter has some coffee ready for us."

Arthur Denison thought that he had never heard more

welcome words, and followed his host across the hall to the drawing-room, which was well furnished in European style, but adapted of course to the climate. The young lady whom he had seen in the morning to such disadvantage was waiting to receive him. Mr. Isaacson made no pretension to be anything more than a man of business, and therefore it was from acquired tact, rather than from the instincts of a gentleman, that he refrained from any allusion to the scene of the morning, and merely introduced his step-daughter, Mabel Seymour, to Captain Denison. The poor girl could not, however, keep back the tell-tale blush, and it was only by an effort that she could restrain a tear.

In that land of dusky people, the fairness of this thorough English girl was more striking than it would have been elsewhere. Floral comparisons are sometimes helpful in the way of description, and "*nemophila*" rather than "*lobelia*" would represent her style of beauty. As a rule, the heroine of every tale is credited with an amount of loveliness seldom met with in real life, but Mabel Seymour made no pretension to any exceptional good looks, and yet there was about her such a charm of simplicity, innocence, and child-like grace, that we must not be surprised if Arthur Denison felt his passing impression of the morning gradually assume a more permanent form, destined, before long, to become indelible.

Though he had first seen this rose just washed in a shower of tears, it must not be supposed that Mabel Seymour was destitute of character. On the contrary, although (to continue our floral comparison) she was like some delicate climbing plant, seeking for support, she was not to be easily separated from any object to which she clung, and still less would she cling anywhere unless her natural instinct and affection led her to do so. In short, though with Arthur Denison it was not a case of love at first sight, it was the case of a little tendril gently and mutely appealing for help and protection against a rough and cruel nature, urged on by pitiless selfishness.

So much by way of parenthesis, or introduction.

Coffee and cool drinks were brought in by the native woman whom Denison had seen in the morning, and who,

though as ugly as most of the natives are when they get old, yet smiled graciously at the good-looking young officer. After some desultory conversation, Arthur Denison, seeing a piano in the room, ventured to ask for some music. Mabel Seymour made the usual apology of want of skill and practice, but, like a well-bred girl, did not require much pressing, and sat down to the piano, but she had scarcely sounded a few chords, when the door opened, and the same servant who had ushered in Captain Denison, went up to his master and whispered some name. Mr. Isaacson seemed a little confused, but replied,

"Oh, yes, certainly; show him in here, it is too late for business."

"Mr. Vaughan" was announced, and a man of unprepossessing appearance, about forty years old, entered the room.

He was prematurely bald, with a thick ring of hair round his face and chin, which seemed to have descended from his head, and gave him the air of an ourang-outang, which was not lessened by a certain jerkiness of manner, which arose from an uneasy feeling of not being quite sure of his social position, curiously joined at the same time with an evident belief in his own importance. Like his friend Mr. Isaacson, he was a self-made man, and ill-natured people said that in each case self had been the chief factor in their rise; and their enemies—or shall we say their victims?—asserted that this rise was made on other people's fall. If a plagiarism may be permitted, Vaughan was the Quirk, and Isaacson the Oily Gammon of the firm; but though they worked together, the deed of partnership was not yet completed.

Captain Denison's bow was a cold one, as he had heard something of Vaughan from his fellow-officers, but cold as it was he almost regretted having made it at all, when he turned again to Mabel Seymour. Nothing is so difficult to describe as mental agitation. It takes as many different forms as it has to do with different persons. Sometimes, but rarely (we are writing about women), they are like the Spartan boy who held the fox-cub in his bosom and died rather than give any sign of his agony; generally the sign *must* come, even if repressed by a supreme effort of will; so now, while the visitor was making his way to the piano,

Mabel Seymour sent an appealing glance to Arthur Denison at her side, which was a sudden revelation to the young man. The look was one of helplessness eloquent in its mute appeal. All was explained in a moment; the cause of that fierce outbreak of anger in the morning, followed by that desolation of sorrow, was now made clear. It was a thought-reading that admitted of no mistake, though the why and the wherefore would have to remain for further investigation. Arthur Denison at once grasped the fact that the luckless girl was to be offered as a sacrifice to this hateful Minotaur.

"Never!" vowed the young man, "while I have nerve in mind and body to prevent it."

So the answering glance flashed back from his honest hazel eyes, "depend on me"; and help and hope seemed to come from that response.

In ordinary life people do not go off into fainting fits, "they seldom express themselves *quite* as they feel;" and accordingly Mabel Seymour gave her hand to Mr. Vaughan, though not indeed with anything like the warmth with which he received it, and then continued to play the piece of music which his entrance had interrupted.

Mr. Isaacson was evidently ill at ease, as he feared that Mr. Vaughan's effusiveness (it was plain that he had been "dining out") might give rise to a scene; so that it was a relief when the young lady pleaded a bad head-ache as an excuse for leaving the room. Mr. Isaacson now returned to the business about the gold mine, and placed the matter before Arthur Denison in the most favourable light, assuring him that it could not fail to be a tremendous success. The young man listened with such flagging attention, that the conversation soon dropped by its own weight, and Mr. Isaacson was forced to say,

"These are details, Captain Denison, which your uncle could enter into more easily than you can do. I only ask you to lay the matter before him as quickly and as fully as possible; and I hope you will not be offended if I say, that supposing, as I trust will be the case, you succeed in getting your uncle to join us, you need not be afraid of coming to me when you need any accommodation, as I shall only be too glad to be of service to you."

This allusion to the business of the morning, made in the presence of a stranger, displeased Captain Denison greatly, but he controlled himself, and soon rose to go, saying that he had to be on duty the next morning by daybreak. His host accepted the excuse on condition of his coming again before long, which he readily promised to do.

The same servant who had announced him, opened the door for his departure, and in doing so looked at him rather keenly, so much so that the officer said sharply,

"Surely I have seen you before?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "I am acquainted with your servant, James Barnett, and am often in his company."

No more was said, but Captain Denison had a vague feeling of doubt as to whether this companionship would lead to much good on either side.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TROOPER BARNETT.

No sooner had the door on its hinges closed upon the young officer, than the unpleasant quarter of an hour commenced which the master of the house had been anticipating.

"Why on earth, Isaacson, do you have a young fellow like that about the place? My game at the best is by no means an easy one, and if you are going to have any double-dealing in the matter, you had better say so at once."

"You needn't put yourself out, old fellow," was the reply, "or be so absurdly jealous. I have given you my word that I will do all in my power to bring about a result that will be to our mutual benefit, and I will keep to what I have said. I have become acquainted with that young man only to-day, and by accident, but I mean to turn him to account. His uncle is Mr. George Robinson, of Liverpool, whom you have often heard of, and if we can only get him

into the swim we shall do well. But I must tell you, that if you mean to be successful in your suit to Mabel you must press it without delay. I had a most unpleasant scene with the girl this morning, which ended in her openly defying me. You know what a pull I have on her, as she is entirely dependent on me, but I must urge you to make the running as soon as you can, for with all her softness the girl is deucedly obstinate; so the sooner you bring the matter to a point the better for both of us."

It is not necessary, nor would it be pleasant, to dwell further on the plotting and planning of these two conspirators. Sufficient indication has been given of their scheme for wrecking the happiness of a defenceless girl; it remains to be seen how far it was successful.

On his return to his quarters at the Abasseah Barracks, Captain Denison was greatly annoyed by finding that his soldier-servant was absent, and his annoyance was increased by the fact that he had had frequent cause for complaint before this.

James Barnett had been in his service about six months. Curiously enough he had a certain resemblance to his master in height, and general outward appearance, but it was only outwardly, for in truth a greater rascal did not exist. He had a plausible manner, and knew how to make himself essential to an officer's comfort; no slight recommendation in a country where the ordinary requirements of Western civilization seem to the apathetic natives almost as burdensome as the *corvée*. But latterly Captain Denison had noticed in him an increasing carelessness, and at the same time (probably cause and effect) he had found him in very doubtful company, both in and out of barracks. He had spoken sharply to him on the subject, but had always been met by some excuse, which if not satisfactory was at any rate plausible.

In about half an hour he made his appearance, and received a reprimand from his master for his neglect, and a warning that if the offence was repeated he would have to return to his ordinary duty in the ranks. The man looked pale and excited, but did not seem to have been drinking. He muttered an excuse of having been with some comrades, and not being aware that it was so late. The scowl with

which he regarded his master as he turned away indicated an evil and vindictive nature. Before dismissing him Captain Denison asked him what he knew of Mr. Isaacson's servant, with whom he had seen him more than once. The question seemed to startle the man, for he answered with a half-stammer,

"Oh, you mean Blundell, sir; yes, sir, I've known him for some time. He's what they call a rock scorpion, born and bred at Gibraltar. Mr. Isaacson places great confidence in him; he's done me a good turn or two. I hope, sir, you don't object to my going with him."

"No," replied Captain Denison; "I know nothing against him; but mind you give heed to what I said to you just now, for I mean it."

Trooper Barnett's military career was destined to come to a speedy termination.

Arthur Denison was one of the most careless fellows in the world. He would come home at night and empty his pockets on the dressing-table, with an absurd idea that money was safe there because it was *en evidence*, though he never counted it. He was by no means a gambler, and the trouble from which Mr. Isaacson extricated him was quite exceptional; but ordinary play was always going on among the young officers of the regiment, though as a rule a £5 note would cover gains and losses all round. Careless as he was, Arthur Denison knew pretty well the state of his finances, and he was surprised to find himself from time to time with a sovereign or two less than he thought he had for his daily expenses. He always locked the door of his room at night, after his servant left him; he never allowed himself to take more than was good for him, either at the mess table or afterwards, so that he could not understand how this money disappeared. He began to count it, but not having the instinct of a detective, he arranged it in small piles of gold and silver, and then found, somewhat to his surprise, that they were untouched, and that he had lost nothing.

About the same time there was a very unpleasant feeling in the regiment, as money was missed in barracks both by officers and men. At first the natives were suspected, as they had been allowed to come in and out pretty freely; but

they were now placed as it were in quarantine, and were not allowed to pass the bounds assigned them. Still the money continued to disappear, and the honour of the regiment was seriously in jeopardy.

A sort of amateur detective committee was formed among the privates, and James Barnett was one of the most active members on it, always ready with suggestions and foremost on the watch; but the thief or thieves seemed also to be on the look-out, and though the losses were less frequent they still continued, and nothing was discovered.

It seemed, however, that Trooper Barnett's work as a detective seriously interfered with his duties as an officer's servant, and after one more warning from his master he found himself in his former position in the ranks. The change was not at all to his liking, and he promised himself an ample revenge.

Some few weeks afterwards Captain Denison was absent for a couple of days, as will be related in due course, and on his return to his quarters he was told that his former servant, James Barnett, had not been seen on parade or elsewhere since he had himself left Cairo. With a sense of uneasiness he went to the drawer where he kept some money, and found to his vexation, more than to his surprise, that it was gone. His room had been entered by a false key, and there could be no doubt as to who was the thief. He sent at once for the Troop Sergeant-Major, who duly reported the affair to the Adjutant, through whom it came to the Colonel, and then Private James Barnett's name appeared on the roll, with a capital D marked against it, and instructions were telegraphed for his arrest.

As we are anxious not to interrupt the progress of our tale more than is absolutely necessary, we may state briefly that he succeeded in getting away to Marseilles, thence to Paris, and by means of a false character was taken into the service of an English gentleman, whom he accompanied to London, in the month of September, 1883.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BIRKET-EL-AZIB.

WE must now return to our hero and heroine, who would have been surprised at such a title; and yet they both felt that circumstances beyond their own control were leading them irresistibly onward to a conclusion which they could not foresee; which they earnestly longed for, and yet at the same time could only arrive at, when preliminary difficulties were surmounted. At first these did not appear to be formidable. It is true that it did not suit Mr. Isaacson's views that any attachment should arise between these young people; but at the same time he was extremely anxious to secure Mr. Robinson's association in his various schemes, and specially in the development of his mine. So Arthur Denison was a frequent visitor at the house; but after the first evening he seldom met the banker, who was often called away to Alexandria.

It is to be hoped that this young officer will not be judged too severely for assuming a greater interest in the mine than he really felt. It was an excuse for his making frequent appointments with Mr. Isaacson to learn all necessary details, which he forwarded to his uncle; but in such a fashion as to make the old gentleman smile at the notion of Arthur becoming a man of business. Still, to humour him, he sent back temporizing replies, which the artful young man turned to his own account in keeping on good terms with Mabel Seymour's step-father.

The estate at Birket, or to give it its full title, Birket-el-Azib, was an oasis in the midst of the desert, owing all its fertility to the stream already mentioned, which flowed from the low range of rocky hills lying to the north of the property. Previous owners had taken some pains to plant tropical shrubs and trees, so that there was a thick belt round the house, in addition to the inevitable palm-trees, which kept guard, as it were, on the outskirts. A small native village had grown up in the neighbourhood, depend-

ent, in a great measure, on the villa, and watered after the ancient Egyptian fashion. Half a mile to the west stretched the vast and seemingly interminable desert, into which the range of hills sank, and were swallowed up.

The railroad station of El Ouan was about six miles distant. Here were sulphur baths, an hotel, and the usual adjuncts of European civilization.

Owing to the disturbed state of the country, Mr. Isaacson had not been able to make any stay on his property, and had left it in the hands of a steward, who employed a good many native labourers, and kept the estate in excellent condition. The house remained empty till the battles of Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir had given security to the country against the tyranny of Arabi, at the end of the year 1882. Mr. Isaacson had furnished the house in European style, and as El Ouan was so near, he seldom remained long in Cairo, preferring the cool shade and refreshing sound of running water to dry and dusty Cairo.

As a matter of course, Arthur Denison was invited to Birket soon after his introductory visit in the town, as Mr. Isaacson was very anxious that he should judge for himself as to the presence of gold in the stream, this being a certain indication that it existed in much larger quantities in the hill where the little river rose.

Excursions to the pyramids, to the petrified forest, and to the Vice-regal gardens at Shootra, were very pleasant opportunities for these young people to find out that they were not indifferent to each other. Although Arthur Denison had made no open declaration of his love, yet he had not hesitated to assure Mabel that she might count on his protection and help in case she should need them. And need them she did before long. For when Richard Vaughan returned to Cairo, he lost no time in pressing his suit on the poor girl; and as Captain Denison could get no decided answer from his uncle, Mr. Isaacson began to think that he had made a mistake in encouraging so much intimacy. So he urged the claims of the banker more persistently and vehemently even than before. At the same time he endeavoured to bring about a completion of the partnership which he so earnestly desired as a means for advancing his own interests. Richard Vaughan on his side as persistently

held back until he was assured of success in his suit. The more aversion Mabel showed to him the more determined he was to go on, and at last laid a most villainous scheme of carrying her off by force.

He could not, of course, tell her step-father of this plan ; but he felt assured that he would not be judged severely by a man who had so much to gain from him. On pretence of satisfying himself thoroughly about the gold mine, he proposed a short visit to Birket, to which Mr. Isaacson made no objection.

The next time that Arthur Denison called, he was fortunate enough to find Mabel alone, but evidently in great distress. After a little coaxing she confided to him her fear of Richard Vaughan, and her shrinking from what she knew she would have to endure when his society would be forced upon her at Birket, and it would be more unbearable even than in Cairo.

"Do you remember, Mabel, the first evening I ever spent with you, when you spoke 'to me only with your eyes, and I replied with mine?' Did you not know then that I had come specially to take care of you? May I not hope one day to have the right to do that which is now only a favour? Mabel, dearest Mabel, it is of no use; I *must* tell you that you are in my thoughts, ay, and in my heart, morning, noon, and night. My whole happiness is bound up in you. Tell me that you care a little for me in return."

"Oh, Arthur, I do not know what to say. Can it be true?" And the fair head rested on his breast, while the revulsion of feeling was so great that the tears welled up and overflowed; but they were tears of joy, and hope, and love: pearls in her lover's eyes of priceless value.

The first chapters of the "old, old story" had been read by each of these young people apart; now when they compared notes they found that they had both got to the same page, and there was not the slightest chance of their losing the place.

The musical octave has only eight notes; but when the dominant tone is love, infinite melodies may be rung upon the joy-bells. As poor Tom Hood said, "There's nothing on earth like making love!" and whether it be made in England or in Egypt, it's like "making hay in fine weather."

This was all very well, but poor little Mabel's fluttering heart told a tale of the storm, that still left its trace behind; and she could not help recalling her past and future dread.

"Don't be afraid, dear child," said Arthur Denison; "you would have been safe before, now you must rest in the *assurance* of being so. Be as patient as you can, knowing that you can afford to be so, for no harm shall come near you. Now I am not only going to preach, but to practise prudence, as I will not run the risk of encountering your step-father."

The "meeting of the waters" sounds well in poetry, but it is as nothing compared to the meeting of the lips of true lovers. This little interlude of love-making must be pardoned. It came like the *Æolian* harp over the sands of the desert.

El Ouan is about eight miles from Cairo by rail; it has been a station for English troops ever since our occupation of Egypt. Captain Denison, so to say, took up his head-quarters of observation here, though of course he had his duties to perform at the Abasseah Barracks in Cairo. He took a room at the hotel, and during the next two or three days came over in the afternoon, and "improved each shining hour" by making friends with the servants, stable-men, and even hangers-on in the yard, where a judicious expenditure of money was by no means wasted. Two days after his interview with Mabel, he learnt that Mr. Isaacson had come over from Cairo, and established himself, his belongings, and his banker-guest at his villa, at Birket-el-Azib.

The same evening, Arthur Denison, taking with him a "burnous" as a simple and convenient form of disguise, made his way to the villa, and concealing himself in the belt of shrubs which surrounded the house, was able to come close enough to look into the rooms on the ground floor which opened upon the verandah. From one of them, which was the dining-room, there came sounds of loud talking and laughing, and it was evident that Richard Vaughan was drinking heavily. This went on till even Isaacson could bear it no longer, and after a vain attempt to quiet him, called for his servant, and managed to get him up-stairs stumbling and half-asleep.

The young officer could also see Mabel alone in the draw-

ing-room, evidently overcome with shame and fear at the sound of this noisy revelry ; but when the inebriated man had been got rid of, and her step-father too had retired, the frightened girl went up to her own room, and opening the window, looked out on the garden lying so peacefully in the moonlight.

She could hardly restrain a cry when she saw the figure of a man in white among the shrubs. Her first impulse was to call out and alarm the house, but some intuitive perception restrained her, and then she felt that she was being guarded by the watchful care of one who was devoted to her. This knowledge soothed and comforted her. She dared not make any sound, but she stayed some time at the window, and was rewarded for her watch by the sight, she could almost have said by the *feeling*, of a kiss borne to her on the night breeze, not unaccompanied by a murmur of love.

As everything seemed safe for the night in this "Castle Dangerous," the sentinel returned to El Ouan, and went to sleep dreaming of the fair vision at the open window. But the watch was not relaxed, for the next morning found Arthur Denison early on the alert, and from his post of observation he could see the enemy approaching on horseback. About a hundred yards from the hotel, Vaughan pulled up, dismounted, and held an animated conversation with a native woman who seemed to have been waiting for him. He was evidently making some sort of bargain with her, as he placed money in her hand, and she hurried off in the direction from which he had come.

The banker then came into the court-yard of the hotel, and commenced another negotiation with the man who managed the stable department. Having concluded this arrangement apparently to his satisfaction, Mr. Vaughan remounted and rode off in the direction of Birket.

He had scarcely set off, when Captain Denison, who of course was dressed as a civilian, appeared upon the scene in search of information ; and the information which he gained startled him considerably. It came out that Mr. Vaughan's interview with the foreman of the yard had ended in his ordering a close carriage and four horses to come to Birket the same night at ten o'clock, to drive him from there to

Cairo, as the last train from El Ouan would have left before then. Denison had an uncomfortable feeling that there was something wrong, as the banker would have been in good time for business had he started the next morning, and he would naturally have slept at El Ouan instead of driving into Cairo so late at night. The sentinel was more on the alert than ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ORIENTAL MYSTERY.

TIME had slipped away during this investigation, but as soon as possible Arthur Denison had his horse saddled, and rode quickly over to Birket. In his previous visits he had remarked a rough native stable not far from the house. Here he fastened up his horse, and then repaired to his former post of observation. He was scarcely surprised to find that the Moorish woman was there before him. She had on a long thin veil, of pale blue silk, embroidered with gold, which reached to her feet. Her face was concealed by the usual linen band which showed only her eyes, and which, like the veil, came down to her ankles. A broad belt slung over her shoulder supported a small morocco-covered box.

A guitar rested on her left arm, the chords of which she struck with her right hand, and at the same time she sung a droning kind of chant, to which Mabel Seymour, seated under the verandah, was listening with an air half amused, half interested. Presently she motioned to the woman to come nearer, who did so, making a salutation after the Eastern manner.

"Can you speak French?" asked Mabel.

"Not well, young lady," was the reply; "but I think you will understand me."

"Do you live at Birket?"

"No, I am a wanderer, and live everywhere and nowhere."

"Who sent you here?"

"No one; I saw the gate open and I came in."

"And how do you get your living?"

"Oh, I sell rings and bracelets. Besides that, an old woman of our tribe taught me a mystery when I was young, and so—"

"What!" interrupted Mabel, "a mystery; what do you mean by that?"

"I can tell the past and the future, by looking at the palm of any one's hand."

Mabel smiled incredulously.

"Ah, my fair young lady," continued the Mooress, "that is nothing. Surely you have heard of the magic ink, which is much more wonderful. One of our wise men would show you anybody or anything you wished to see. He would call some little donkey-boy standing by, it would not matter who he was, then he would pour this ink into the hollow palm of his hand, and ask you to name some one whom you would like to see, even in your own country. Then the little Egyptian boy would look upon the ink in his hand, and tell you what the person you spoke of was doing. It might be an old lady getting into her carriage, or a young gentleman reading a book. One of your great English lords saw it done again and again, and said it was as true as it was marvellous. I cannot do that, but if you will let me look at your hand I will tell you something that will surprise you."

Mabel hesitated, and the woman continued:

"Do not be afraid, good English lady; I will do you no harm. I think that you are very unhappy. You know three English gentlemen; two of them are old, one is young; two of them love you, one does not. You love one of them dearly, but he is poor; the other is rich, and will give you all you want."

"Enough," said Mabel, with some dignity, but blushing at the same time; "I know not how you learnt this, but I wish to hear no more. Go your way."

And so saying she put some silver into the woman's hand.

"Thanks, gracious lady; pardon my boldness. I only said this to prove that I know much. But this is not all."

She then unstrapped the little box she carried, and opening it showed a collection of Eastern trinkets, rings, and small bottles that generally hold attar of roses. She took out one of them and said,

"Fair young English lady, I told you truly that you have sorrow. Will you take this, which is a talisman against all trouble. Ah! fear not. I will myself smell and taste it before I offer it to you. The plants from which this essence comes have been carefully gathered in Arabia by most learned Hakim, the smell and taste are alike good. The one makes you forget grief, the other transports you to Paradise. Of the odour you may judge for yourself, while I will taste it to prove how harmless it is."

She then opened the tiny bottle, which she offered to Mabel. She had not exaggerated the sweetness and power of the perfume. It was delicious. It seemed to contain all that was exquisite. It was the essence of every luscious flower deprived of its grossness, and leaving an aroma as from the garden of Eden.

Ah, Mabel, Mabel! Hast thou forgotten him who brought into Paradise that which captivated thy mother Eve to her ruin? Poor girl, she seemed magnetized, so to say, by the scent, and, retaining the little phial, said,

"Indeed, you have not said too much in praise of this wonderful perfume. I will keep this bottle."

"Permit me," replied the woman, "to give you another instead of that one, which is only half full."

Mabel made no objection, being unaware that the contents of the second bottle were far stronger than those in the first, and though possessing the same smell were most pernicious in their effects. The handful of piastres which she gave the woman seemed to content her, as she made a series of salutations, accompanied by a profusion of thanks, and went out of the garden as she had entered it.

It may be as well to explain here that both phials contained a preparation of "hasheesh," which is well known to act as a most powerful opiate, and is of an extremely subtle nature.

Arthur Denison, himself unseen, had witnessed all that had passed. His first thought had been to come forward boldly, and hear what this Moorish woman was saying, but prudence prevailed, as he felt sure that Mabel would tell him all, and he wished also to examine the woman himself. He waited till she was well on her way back to El Ouan, and then rapidly overtaking her, began to question her rather sharply. He told her at once that he had seen her in conversation with Richard Vaughan earlier in the day, and asked her how it was that she had found her way to Birket, and what her object had been in going.

At first she seemed startled, but soon regained her self-possession, and answered him in broken French,

"Noble sir, it is true that I held converse with your gracious countryman at El Ouan. I did but ask an alms of him, which he generously bestowed, and then told me that if I went to Birket I should find a wealthy English Pacha, and that as he was himself returning thither he would purchase from my store. He so far spake truly, that I found a *château*, and a beautiful young lady; but the English Pacha I found not, nor did the signor appear."

"Now tell me," asked Arthur Denison, in the tone of one who would be answered, "what was in that small bottle which the young lady bought of you?"

The woman again seemed startled, but answered at once,

"Noble sir, will you deign yourself to inhale the most wonderful perfume contained in this little bottle? The secret has been handed down from the days of King Solomon, and he may count himself a happy man who has the good fortune to anticipate one of the joys of Paradise."

She offered him the phial, and he thought as he smelt it that the woman had not exaggerated its delights. All the odours of Araby the blest seemed to have been imprisoned in that little space, having been gathered up by some zephyr that had skimmed their surface, and were now diffused by that same zephyr set loose to enchant each mortal sense. This may sound like some high-flown poetry, but it feebly represents the ethereal charm produced by this momentary inhalation.

The woman appeared satisfied with the result, but rather hastily demanded the bottle back, as she said the perfume was too precious to be exposed to the air. Arthur Denison felt rather ashamed of his suspicions, gave her some piastres, and returned to the villa.

This time he went up boldly to the house, and hoped to have found Mabel still in the verandah, but not seeing her, he was forced to go to the door, and seek admittance in the usual way. The old native woman from Cairo, with whom he was a favourite, ushered him into the drawing-room with a grin of welcome. Mabel, looking flushed and excited, sprang up to meet him, but of course not knowing that he had seen all that had passed between the Moorish woman and herself, was on the point of asking him first, whether the vision which she had had of him the previous night was a real one, when the door opened again, and her step-father entered, accompanied by Richard Vaughan.

It was evident that he was both surprised and vexed at the unexpected visit of the officer. His greeting was the coldest possible :

"Ah, Captain Denison, I did not look to see you here. I have thought it strange that lately you have always called at my house in Cairo when I have been absent; and have not yet given me any definite answer from England. I hope, however, that you have followed me here on business, and that you will be able to satisfy both my friend Mr. Vaughan and myself, that we may look for your uncle's co-operation in our important undertaking. We have just returned from a visit to the rocks, and Mr. Vaughan will assure you that what little has been done gives promise of much greater results."

Arthur Denison looked, as he felt, very uncomfortable, and stammered out,

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Isaacson, that my uncle still seems undecided, but I hope that the next mail from England will bring—"

Isegrim now appeared unmistakably in the gleam of the wolfish eyes, and the interruption came short and sharp,

"Captain Denison, I think it is time, for your sake and my own, that an end should be put to this fooling. For some reason, best known to yourself,"—here he cast a cruel

glance at Mabel,—“you have insinuated yourself into my house under what I must call false pretences. I am not altogether blind. I have remarked the growing intimacy between yourself and my step-daughter, to which I must now put an end at once and for always. My friend, Mr. Vaughan, is a gentleman whose addresses I have encouraged, and if Mabel has not received them as I could have wished, I believe it has been owing to some romantic notions which you have put into her head. Not a word, Captain Denison, not a word,” as Arthur endeavoured to stop this outburst, “I am aware that I have spoken plainly, but it has become necessary. Should you wish to see me in Cairo on business, you know where to find me, but a visit on any other account will be an unwarrantable intrusion. I may add that, if my step-daughter marries without my consent, she will not have one shilling to call her own. I have the honour to wish you good-day.”

Poor Mabel looked and felt overwhelmed by this brutal outbreak. The flower could only bend its head to the storm, and Arthur Denison himself felt that an altercation with such a man would only provoke a cowardly revenge on the defenceless girl when he was gone; but his flashing eye and clenched hand showed what his answer would have been if he had been alone. He did not trust himself to say one word, but bowing to Mabel, who seemed utterly crushed, he left the room without even looking at the two men, who, he felt sure, were joined in some unholy league.

Outside the house, however, he could restrain himself no longer. His outraged love and his wounded honour equally called for revenge. The storm of passion broke out, and would have raged even yet more fiercely if he had not been sobered by the thought that his first duty was not towards himself but towards the poor girl left in the hands, and to the tender mercies, of two villains. By a strong effort of will he calmed himself sufficiently to remember the task which lay before him, and which demanded his utmost skill and energy.

Immediately on his return to El Ouan he sent for the foreman of the hotel yard, an Englishman, to whom he made himself known as an officer in the army of occupation,

and to whom he imparted his suspicions about the object for which Mr. Vaughan had ordered the carriage, though, of course, without mentioning Mabel in the matter, merely saying that he had his own reasons for desiring special attention to be given to so unusual a proceeding.

The man was all the more disposed to listen to Captain Denison as the banker had beaten him down to the very lowest price for the carriage. A handsome present settled the matter, and he further undertook to send thoroughly trustworthy men that night, who would receive private instructions to take their orders from the officer in case of necessity ; he, of course, on his part taking full responsibility, which he would justify to his commanding officer. All that could be done then was to wait for the evening as patiently as possible ; but it may be well supposed that patience was not the virtue most prominent on this occasion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RESCUED AND LOST.

Soon after nine o'clock, Arthur Denison started for Birket, having previously assured himself that the carriage would follow him, and be there at the appointed time. He fastened his horse to a palm-tree outside the house, so as to be ready at once, in case of need ; he then drew so near that he could see and partly hear what was going on inside.

Mr. Isaacson, and his guest were seated in the dining-room, but instead of the noisy revelry that had prevailed the preceding evening, they were evidently discussing business, as papers were lying on the table before them. Isaacson was apparently pressing the banker to sign some

document, which the latter would not do, but at last he said excitedly,

"Well, well. To-morrow, in Cairo, at twelve o'clock. All will be settled by that time."

At this moment Mr. Isaacson's servant, Blundell (of whom we shall hear more hereafter), came in and told his master that he was wanted by his steward in the village. He made his excuse, and went out. In a few minutes Richard Vaughan left the room, and went into the interior of the house. There was a dim light in the drawing-room, sufficient to show Mabel Seymour lying on a sofa, seemingly sleeping for sorrow.

It was now nearly ten o'clock, and in the quiet of the summer night the sound of the wheels of the coming carriage could be heard in the distance.

As the clock struck ten, Richard Vaughan entered the drawing-room, locked the door, and looked round carefully. He then came, leant over the unconscious girl, and had put his arms out to raise her up, when a blow, swift, sharp, and strong, knocked him down, and he fell like an animal in the shambles—fell headlong, and rolled over utterly stunned. That blow was the answer to Mr. Isaacson's speech in the afternoon.

The wretched banker had not seen Arthur Denison come in at the open window, and so was quite unprepared for the retribution that overtook him. He lay like a log on the floor, while Arthur turned to the sofa where, to his surprise, Mabel was still sleeping. She did not seem to have fainted, as her breathing was soft, low, and regular. Her long hair hung loosely over her shoulders, one arm drooped at her side, while in her hand, tightly clasped, was the small bottle which the Moorish woman had given her in the afternoon.

The mystery was explained. She had evidently been inhaling the scent, and doubtless seduced by its attractive perfume had taken repeated draughts of it until she had sunk into a state of coma, from which it would be difficult to arouse her.

Arthur Denison had no doubt now as to the villainous nature of the plot that had been laid. The Moorish woman had been paid by Vaughan to palm off this soporific as a

harmless perfume; he had also bribed Blundell, Mr. Isaacson's servant, to call his master out of the house by some trumped-up message from the steward, thus leaving him free to carry the girl through the garden, and so to the carriage waiting at the gate to convey them to Cairo. Had Mabel recovered her senses on the road, another inhalation of the perfume, which was as strong as chloroform, would have reduced her to a fresh state of insensibility.

Once in his house, of course the poor girl would have been at his mercy, as nothing could have saved her character but immediate marriage, and he trusted to time to reconcile her to the inevitable. From this shameful plot Arthur Denison had delivered her.

He now went hastily to the door, unlocked it, and called out loudly for Fatima, the old Egyptian servant, who soon came running in, and broke out into shrill cries when she saw the confusion of the room, the banker lying in a sort of heap on the floor, and her young mistress apparently lifeless on the sofa. He told her rather sharply to be quiet, to go at once and get ready to accompany Miss Seymour to Cairo; also to bring wraps, etc., for the journey. This done, he carried Mabel very carefully in his arms (it was pitiful to see her helplessness), placed her in the carriage, with Fatima beside her, and gave the word to drive straight to Mr. Isaacson's house in the Abdeen road, while he galloped on before to see that all was right. They reached Cairo without misadventure, though it was nearly midnight. Fatima had the key of the outside gate, and took Mabel in still half-asleep. The carriage was sent round to some stables, the two men handsomely paid, and then Arthur Denison rode to Shepherd's Hotel, where he spent the night; advisedly we say nothing about his sleeping.

Early the next morning he repaired to his quarters, and desired that his servant might be sent to him. To his annoyance he was told that James Barnett had not reported himself for the last two days, and then it was that he discovered, as we have already narrated, that he had lost not only his servant but the sum of about £20. The fates were clearly against him, for he shortly afterwards received

a summons from the colonel of the regiment, requiring his immediate attendance.

"Captain Denison," said his superior officer, "you must be aware that you have committed a most serious breach of military discipline by absenting yourself from barracks without leave. I have sent for you in this informal manner that you may have the opportunity of giving me such explanation as you can as to the cause of your absence."

"Sir," replied the captain, "before I left Cairo, I sent in a request to you for two days' leave on very urgent private affairs."

"That is true," rejoined the colonel; "but you never waited to see if that leave would be granted, and an officer of your standing must know that this is a very grave offence, to say nothing of the bad example set to your juniors in the regiment. Still any statement now made to me will be held as confidential, and shall not be used to your prejudice."

Arthur Denison felt at once that his best course would be to tell the colonel, without any reserve, all that had taken place, and he did so, trusting to the assurance given that he should not suffer for his frankness.

After a few minutes' reflection, Colonel Maclean, who was a kind and generous-hearted man, said, "Captain Denison, I have always found you to be a most exemplary officer, and the circumstances which you have just related are in every way exceptional. I desire to spare you as much as I can; but a Court of Inquiry must be held, and after consulting with the General in command I will see what can be done, but for the present you must confine yourself to your quarters."

The result was that the matter was left in the hands of Colonel Maclean, who continued the captain's arrest for ten days, and so the affair ended.

But ten days never passed more slowly or more wearily. The moment the arrest was taken off, our hero, Captain Denison, made his way to the house in the Abdeen road; but, to his surprise and vexation, outside of it he found a notice in French and English, stating that this most desirable residence, furnished in European style, was vacant, and would be let immediately, on reasonable terms. Inquiries could be made of the person left in charge.

This person being summoned soon made his appearance, and turned out to be an old Jew, who, though extremely voluble on the cheapness and desirability of the house as a residence, either could not, or would not, give any information about Mr. Isaacson's movements. "He might be at Birket, or he might have gone to England; he really could not say."

Arthur Denison lost no time in riding over to Birket, where he found the house in charge of Fatima, who received him with floods of tears, and incoherent phrases of grief. She managed at last to make him understand that Mr. Isaacson had followed them to Cairo on the morning after their flight, that he flew into a furious rage with Mabel, who was in a state of great mental and bodily exhaustion; but as soon as she was able to be moved, he had all their things packed up, and they started for England.

More than this poor Fatima did not know; she had not been told what their address would be, of the banker she had seen nothing. All this was very unsatisfactory, nor could any further information be gained from the steward on the estate. An application to the British consul at Cairo was not more successful. He would have been very glad to have helped in the matter, but Mr. Isaacson had been too crafty to take him into his confidence. He believed that Richard Vaughan was at Alexandria, but he too had taken good care to keep out of the way. The Moorish woman might possibly be found, but what then? Nothing could be proved against her, and in any case a scandal would be started, which as yet did not exist.

All this was true, and it was plain that nothing could be done: no wonder then if anxiety, hope deferred, if not blighted, added to the unhealthiness of the climate, brought on an attack of low fever, which prostrated poor Arthur, and caused Mr. Robinson so much anxiety, as shown in his letter of August 7th, though he did not know the cause.

Regimental duty was out of the question, and when Captain Denison applied for a furlough of three months on sick-leave it was at once granted, and so he took his passage in a French steamer from Alexandria to Marseilles early in the month of September, 1883.

CHAPTER XXX.

"ARCADES AMBO."

THIS Egyptian interlude has been a necessity. We must now gather up the threads of our tale, so that it may be, not a succession of "purple patches," but a piece of tapestry, cunningly wrought in divers colours, and woven into an harmonious whole.

The Continental train from Dover steamed slowly into the Charing Cross station a few minutes after six o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, September 25th, 1883. There was the usual number of persons waiting its arrival; mostly porters who ran on with it; some attaching themselves to the carriage doors, in order to let out the passengers at the right moment, while others discounted in their minds probable tips for rescued luggage; there was also a little crowd, broken into groups, eagerly scanning every carriage as it passed, to see if it contained the expected friend or relation to be welcomed home again; and lastly there were the idlers always to be found on such occasions, many of them on the watch to pick up "unconsidered trifles" that their excited owners might have overlooked.

We must call attention to two of these gentlemen, who might have passed unnoticed in a London crowd, but who would have been pretty certain to have attracted the eye of a detective, who had wanted either, or both of them. As there was no such detective on the look-out, we can examine them while the train is coming in. One of them, Thomas Smithers by name, had the air of a groom out of place, which indeed he was, but he looked less slouching than those "horsey" men generally do. He stood about 5 feet 10 inches, was strongly built, muscular rather than stout; clean shaved, with a white belcher round his throat, and a billycock hat on his head. His appearance greatly belied him if he had not been in "trouble" more than once, and yet he was one of those who "would smile and smile" all the time that he was a villain. His companion had some-

thing of a foreign look, shown by a sallow complexion and dark moustache. He was dressed rather respectably, but they both had a certain uneasy air, and kept restlessly on the move.

All at once the dark-looking man seized his companion by the arm, and dragging him on one side, said excitedly,

"There, there, Jim; I'm blowed if it isn't *him*! Who would have thought it? Let's be off!"

"What the devil are you up to, Sam?" was the reply; "and pray, who on earth do you mean by Jim? I don't own to no such a bloomin' name, so don't you go a-miscallin' me like that, or it'll be the worse for you."

"Oh, bother your name; that don't make no difference; but for gracious sake look over there, and then see if you hadn't need to keep your weather eye open."

Mr. Thomas Smithers, whose wrath had been roused by being called Jim, looked in the direction indicated by his companion, and turning deadly pale, at once endeavoured to "efface" himself behind a porter who was carrying a large wicker basket on his shoulders, and thus afforded a convenient shelter.

The "him" thus apostrophized, "regardless of grammar," was none other than Captain Denison, who was perfectly unconscious of the effect that the sight of him had produced on the two spectators, for his thoughts, as well as his eyes, were occupied with the expectation of seeing his uncle and his sister, whom he had hoped to have found waiting for him on the platform. He claimed his luggage, as if he hardly knew whether he had any or not, or cared what became of it, but the tip-expecting porter soon recalled him to himself, and he desired it to be taken to the Charing Cross Hotel, whither he followed it, and was himself followed by Mr. Thomas Smithers and his friend.

It will avoid needless mystification if we state at once that these "waiters on Providence" were Trooper James Barnett, who had been "wanted" for some time past, as a deserter from the Hussars, and Samuel Blundell, servant unattached, and hanger on to Mr. Isaacson, of Cairo, also of Crutched Friars, and St. John's Wood, Gentleman and Commission Agent, "in partibus infidelium," or wherever else business might be done.

Their discourse on the platform, where, from the other side of the bookstall, they could command the ingoing and outcoming of the hotel was not edifying, but we must perforce listen to it. Thus it began :

"Well, old pal," said James Barnett, "this is a rummy go. To think of *his* turning up, promiscuous like ! I wonder what his little game is. Do you fancy he's come over after his young woman ? You told me that your governor kept everything very dark, after that queer start at Birket, and so I don't fancy he'll be best pleased when he knows that this young fellow's turned up in London. However, I give you the straight tip, I've an old score to settle with him, and he'll have to bleed a bit for it. As Jack Sheppard said, 'Nix my dolly, pals, fake away !' We ain't noways particular. If his old uncle's up here, see if we don't land some swag. But we must be precious fly. Ah, here he comes, Tom-all-alones ! and not in the best of tempers by the look of him. Ware hawk."

The officer, of course in plain clothes, had gone into the entrance-hall of the hotel, walked up to the bureau, and asked for Mr. Robinson, from Liverpool.

"If you, sir, are Captain Denison, of the 50th Hussars, I have a letter for you from Mr. Robinson, which he wished you to receive immediately on your arrival. He gave orders that everything should be done to make you comfortable, and we hope that you will have no cause for complaint."

The room which Mr. Robinson had himself selected for his nephew before his departure left nothing to be desired, and after barrack life in Egypt seemed luxurious ; but the sudden change from hope to disappointment was so great, that Arthur Denison hardly realized where he was, and the smiling waiter had to ask more than once what time he would like to dine, whether he would wish for anything at once, and so on, before he could get an answer, and then nothing was ordered but some warm water.

After a "wash and brush up," declining all offers of dinner, he walked out into the Strand, and sauntered eastward, almost aimlessly, trying to forget his trouble in the excitement of London sights and sounds.

It is needless to say that on the opposite side of the way

Messrs. Barnett and Blundell followed cautiously, and marked down their game with keen eyes. As the Gaiety Restaurant seemed inviting, the captain, all unconscious that he was being so watched, went in for some dinner, while the two "Arcadians" plotted and planned.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AT THE ADELPHI.

JAMES BARNETT plainly had the larger share of brains, and was the managing partner in the firm, so he said to his companion,

"Will you mount guard while I go off duty on urgent private affairs? Don't lose sight of the bloke, and if he shows up before I come back, you run him to earth, and meet me at the Charing Cross station to report progress."

The bill of fare seemed very much to the officer's taste, and the watch remained unrelieved; but about half an hour after Barnett had gone, an elderly gentleman, with a countrified look, having hair, beard, and moustache streaked with grey, wearing a pair of smoke-coloured spectacles, and having an overcoat on his arm, came up to Blundell, and asked to be directed to the Lyceum. On its being pointed out to him he seemed rather undecided, but after waiting a minute, he turned sharply and said,

"Not such a bad get up, eh, Sam?"

"Well, I'm blowed!" was the reply. "You did just about get over me. But what's your little game?"

"That's more than I can tell you as yet. But you see it would never do for the captain to get sight of me, and yet I must keep my eye on him. Ah! there he is. I'll bet he's bound for some theayter. Quick march!"

The Lyceum at eight p.m. was out of the question for any-

thing like a good seat; but the show-board at the Adelphi looked attractive, so Captain Denison walked into the box office and took a stall. James Barnett went round and took a couple of pit tickets, trusting to chance for the result. It certainly seemed as if fortune favoured them, for they had scarcely got into the theatre when Blundell said to his friend in an excited whisper,

"Look there, Jim—I mean, Tom—in that box on the left above the dress circle is our Miss Seymour, with an old lady and her daughter who visit at our house; I forget their names. Do you suppose the captain knows she's here?"

"We shall soon see," replied Barnett; "if not, we'll give him the tip."

At this moment the curtain rose, and it was very evident, from Arthur Denison's manner, that however much Mabel Seymour might be in his thoughts, he had not the slightest idea that she was so near him, and as he was sitting on the same side of the house as herself, he could not easily discover her presence.

At the end of the first act Barnett nudged his companion to follow him out, and then led the way to the nearest oyster shop, ordered a couple of dozen blue points, and some stout, to be taken into an inner room, and at the same time asked for a pen and ink, as he wished to write a note.

These proceedings, though highly appreciated by Blundell, so far as the creature comforts were concerned, greatly excited his curiosity, and when the note, which was a short one, was finished, he broke out,

"You're a queer one, and no mistake. I'm blessed if I know what you're up to. You tell me you mean to watch the captain, as a cat does a mouse, and yet you come out here a-writing notes, and ordering a jolly feed. Seems to me you're going in for pleasure first and business afterwards, as the monkeys used to do on the Rock, when they started eating oranges, and finished up by chasing the cats."

Barnett made no reply, but put the note into his hands. It ran thus,—

"An unknown friend takes the liberty of informing Cap-

tain Denison that if he will look into the box on the second tier, left-hand side of the house, next but one to the stage, he will see some one he knows. Mr. I. is out of town."

"Well," asked Blundell, "what then? What does it matter to us? And how came you to know that old Isaacson was out of town?"

"Didn't you tell me so yourself," was the reply, "as we was a-coming along, and that you hadn't no call to go home?"

"That's right enough," said Blundell; "and what's more, I could lay my hand on him, if I wanted to it, not a hundred miles away from here."

"That'll do, Sam; stow away those oysters, and some soft tommy, and look sharp, for we've no time to lose."

Not wishing to attract attention, they re-entered the theatre quietly, and kept in the background till the curtain fell. Captain Denison, whom they had carefully watched, now rose from his seat, cast a hasty glance round the house, and not seeing—indeed, not expecting to see—any one he knew, sauntered out.

This was the signal for business. First, for the delivery of the note, which was arranged without much difficulty by the expenditure of a shilling, accompanied by a request to the attendant that when the occupant of such a stall returned, he should be asked if he were Captain Denison, and in that case the note was to be handed to him.

The next act required all the tact and skill of an experienced London pickpocket, but James Barnett was equal to the occasion. Having arranged with Blundell to wait for him at the pit door, he made his way to the Strand entrance, and there, as he had hoped, he found Captain Denison examining the photographs of the actors and actresses in the piece, which were framed and hung up in the lobby. He was carrying his overcoat on his left arm, while on the same side, what seemed to be a pocket-book, was temptingly visible as filling the breast pocket of his coat. To pass him, and then (waiting for the entrance of three or four persons returning to their places) to stumble awkwardly against him, gave Barnett the desired opportunity of abstracting the pocket-book. Of course profuse apologies were not want-

ing, and excuses for shortsightedness, made and accepted, covered a blundering exit into the street.

The shilling given to the attendant on the stalls was duly earned, and Arthur Denison's astonishment on receiving the note was only exceeded by his amazement at its contents. As the curtain had not risen, he stood up in his place, and looked earnestly at the box indicated. Mabel Seymour was leaning forward, and looking listlessly round the house. She suddenly caught Arthur's eye, and was so painfully agitated that the old lady who was with her could not help remarking it, and said,

"My dear Mabel, what is the matter? Are you unwell? You look as white as a ghost. Is the heat too much for you? What can I get for you? Here are my salts."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Mildmay," replied Mabel; "it was only a passing spasm. I feel better already. Please don't trouble about me. But if you don't mind I will sit at the back of the box for a little while. I shall be all right again directly."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CIGAR CASE.

WE must not wait till the fluttering of her heart had ceased, but follow the confederates on their way from the theatre.

"Well," asked Sam, "what luck?"

"Hush!" was the reply. "Cross over quietly to the other side, and join me further on."

They made the best of their way by Catherine Street and White Hart Street, to the court out of Drury Lane where

James Barnett lodged, and where he had put on his disguise. Masquerading in connection with the theatres being not unusual in that quarter of the town, change of dress does not attract much notice.

When the door had been carefully locked and a candle lit, the pocket-book was opened with trembling hands. The sight of bank notes drew out a long low whistle of content, and when counted, turned out to be ten for £5 each.

"Well, Jim, not a bad haul. Now let's smoke the weeds and burn the book. It would never do for us to try and put it up the spout."

"Fair and softly, Sam, if you please. I've not done with it yet. I'm going to have a look at our noble captain's correspondence, though I'll bet it's mostly love letters."

As we are already acquainted with their contents, we need only remark that Barnett's excitement on reading the one dated September 25th (*that very morning*) was unbounded. He was, literally and actually, speechless from surprise.

"Now, mate," said Sam Blundell at last, "out with it. You needn't be so precious close. I don't see no more bank notes there."

"Wait a while, my sonny," replied Barnett; "I'll look after the flimsies. You go out and get some lush, and when you come back, I'll tell you something that 'll take your breath away."

Drink of any kind was always acceptable to Mr. Blundell, more particularly when he was not obliged to pay for it himself, and on his return he began to fill his glass with a liberal hand.

"You must put a stopper on that, Sam," said his comrade; "our work's not done yet, and you've got to keep straight. What should you say to going in for a share of £12,000?"

"Now, none of your bloomin' jokes with me," said Sam, incredulously, "'cos they won't go down. I votes we spend this before we look after any more."

"I tell you what it is, Sam," replied Barnett wrathfully, 'if you don't choose to work with me on the square, I'll

soon find some one else as will, and then you'll be left out in the cold."

This prospect was by no means agreeable to Sam, who broke into a torrent of expletives, and professed himself willing then and there to have a mining operation performed on his eyes, as a proof of his devotion to his pal, and of his readiness to undertake whatever might be required of him.

When the air had been partially cleared from this verbal bombardment, Barnett read the letter aloud, and resumed quietly,

"That'll do. I must work this job myself, for it'll be no child's play. You've got to keep Denison out of the way for the next two or three days. Then he may go down to the New Forest, if he likes, but I don't mean him to find much to go for. Now for a transformation scene."

With these words he went to a corner of the room, where was a washhandstand, small glass, etc., and throwing aside the disguise of his grey hair, spectacles and muffler, returned to his seat in a minute or two with his own hair carefully parted in the middle, a light moustache, turned-down collar and black tie.

"Not a bad get-up, is it?" he asked of his astonished companion. "At a pinch I might pass as a certain officer of the Hussars? But we've no time to waste. Here's a fiver to keep you going, but don't change it hereabouts, and don't lush your senses away."

On their way back to the Adelphi, he continued,

"What you have to do now, is to find Isaacson; (you say he is not far off) tell him that the captain is in London, and has seen the young lady in the theatre; that he is sure to follow her, and arrange an interview either for to-night or to-morrow. Once let Isaacson nail him, and there's sure to be a devil of a row, and one or other of them may get locked up. Anyhow we must chance that, and I leave it to you to work that little game. I mean to go from Waterloo by the 3.15 train to-morrow afternoon. Do your utmost impossibilities to be there, and to report progress, but for God's sake don't fail to meet the up train at 9.45 on Thursday morning, and you may count upon the latest news being *very* sensational."

Sam promised implicit obedience, and so they parted.

We must follow Arthur Denison. How he sat out the remainder of the play he could never clearly remember. It was an absolute case of metempsychosis; in plain English, his body occupied stall No. 58, but his head and his heart were in that box on the second tier.

After a time Mabel resumed her place in the front, but she only dared, now and then, to send down a stray glance below, and Arthur was too much of a gentleman to direct the attention of others to the cynosure of his adoring eyes, so that a good many of these glances on either side, "wasted their sweetness on the desert air." Enough, however, were interchanged to keep the electric current of love in full operation.

At last the play came to an end, but before the curtain fell, Arthur was waiting in the corridor, to convert his dream of hope into actuality of realization. He was forced, however, to be very careful, as of course he was entirely ignorant of Mabel's position, or of how far she was under "surveillance." His greeting, therefore, was warm, without being effusive, and Mabel had recovered her self-possession sufficiently to be able to make the introduction to Mrs. Mildmay an ordinary one, and that lady expressed herself pleased at making the acquaintance of an officer who had known dear Mabel in Egypt, and quoted Mr. Obenreizer's well-worn saying as to the smallness of the world.

But there, alas! it ended.

"Would Captain Denison be so kind as to look for their carriage, as they had no gentleman with them?" was the natural request after a few ordinary civilities had passed, but it put an effectual damper on all interchange of confidences. There was no help for it, and so he had to escort the lady chaperon, leaving the young people to follow closely behind.

But he had his reward; for having duly seen the ladies into the carriage, he was witness to a friendly contention as to whether Mrs. Mildmay should be put down at her house in Regent's Park, and send Mabel on home, or whether, as she insisted, she should see Mabel safely to her door.

"What would Mr. Isaacson say, my dear, if he knew that I had let you go home alone, and he out of town?"

So she had her way, and Arthur had the satisfaction of telling the coachman, Alpha Road, and made his good-night bow to the ladies.

Jumping into a hansom he promised a double fare for double quick driving, and so reached St. John's Wood long before the carriage.

But now it was, that, wishing to have a cigar, he felt for his case, and found that he had been robbed. He was greatly annoyed at the loss, as he feared his uncle would be vexed at what he might consider an act of carelessness. He thought more about the money than the letters, as it never occurred to him that they could be used for any bad purpose.

But his excitement and delight at having found his beloved Mabel were so great, that he put aside the unpleasant thought of his stolen pocket-book to a more convenient season.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SCREWED IN.

MRS. MILDMAY'S carriage drove up in due time, and the young lady alighting, ran to the outer gate of her house, of which she had the latch-key. The gate did not open very easily, and creaked on its hinges. Mabel was naturally a timid girl, but she did not scream or seem frightened, when some one came out of the shadow of the wall, just as she was about to close the gate. She had an intuitive perception as to who the some one was, for she said at once,

"Oh, Arthur, you shouldn't—you really shouldn't—"

The young man did not pay the least attention to her remonstrance, but shut the gate and followed her to the

house, where lights were burning in the hall, and in one of the sitting-rooms on the ground-floor, which she entered, and renewed her protest,

"So very imprudent, you know—so late at night—you really must go; what will the servants think?"

Jane Smithers, the only female servant, was at that moment, like the cat, thinking of nothing at all, for she was sitting at the table in the kitchen, with her head buried in her hands, fast asleep.

Arthur seemed perfectly indifferent as to what she, or any one else thought, for the only answer he gave to Mabel's protest was not a vocal one, and yet being repeated more than once, it effectually closed her lips. She was just beginning a whole series of questions, when she heard the creaking of the outer gate, and footsteps stealthily coming up the gravel path.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur," she whispered in an agony of fear; "for my sake, conceal yourself."

He had no time to realize the situation, before she opened a door close to where he was standing, almost thrust him into a small dark room, locked the door upon him, and put the key in her pocket. She then rang the bell loudly for Jane, but had hardly done so before Mr. Isaacson entered the room, exclaiming,

"Why, Mabel, what on earth is the meaning of this? Are you aware that it is past twelve o'clock? Where have you been to?"

The girl nerved herself to reply as steadily as she could,

"Mrs. Mildmay wrote to me this afternoon, to say that she had a box at the Adelphi, and would be pleased if I would accompany Kate and herself. She called for me and brought me back. I wonder you did not meet her carriage."

Mr. Isaacson remarked to himself that there was no word of excuse, and no reference to his pleasure or displeasure, in the matter. He took no notice, however, but merely said,

"You would have been wiser if you had stayed at home, for you are dreadfully pale, and the sooner you go to bed the better, as we shall start to-morrow morning for the country." Then, addressing Jane (who stood in the door-

way blinking like an owl, and dreadfully frightened at the unexpected appearance of her master), he continued, "Wake up, girl, and attend Miss Seymour to her room; see that her things are properly packed, and be ready yourself to accompany her to-morrow. Now go."

Mabel lingered on as long as she could, hoping to outstay Mr. Isaacson (she never allowed herself even to think of him as her step-father), but in vain.

"Jane is waiting for you, Mabel, good-night," made it impossible for her to remain.

When she was in her own room, and had dismissed the maid, she broke into an uncontrollable fit of crying, which relieved her overstrung nerves. Her agitation and terror would have been even greater than it was, could she have seen what Mr. Isaacson was about.

Being perfectly certain that Arthur Denison could not have had time to leave the house, he marked with an air of satisfaction that the key had been removed from the closet-door, and he felt sure that his prisoner would remain quietly where he was, at any rate for a time. He reflected for a few minutes, and then said to himself,

"If I insist on the girl giving up the key (I'm sure she has it), there will be a regular scene, perhaps a scuffle, and in any case a great scandal. I have no wish just now to figure in a police-court, either as plaintiff or defendant. I am resolved what to do. I will give this young officer a lesson which he will not forget, and which perhaps will cool his love-making ardour."

He then left the room, and this is what he did. First he brought in a box of tools, then he went into the kitchen, where he took down a couple of shelves, and returned with them into the dining-room. Arthur Denison, in his prison, could only hear indistinctly what was going on, and was greatly puzzled by the sounds which followed; they seemed to be like carpentering, and so they were. The door of the little pantry opened outwards, that is into the dining-room, and there would be no difficulty in a young fellow like Denison breaking it open; but, as Oxford undergraduates can testify, "screwing in" is as effectual an imprisonment as bolts and bars. It is true that this door did not lend itself to the operation so readily as an "oak" would have done,

but Matthew Isaacson was equal to the occasion. With a gimlet he bored four holes in each plank, two at either end, and then screwed the wood into the panelling well across the door. It would require a mathematical calculation to give the exact power of resistance thus offered to pressure from within, but anyhow it was far beyond all that Arthur Denison could bring to bear. This done, he left the door of the dining-room unlocked, but carried off the tool-box. He had no bodily defect, but his mind was as deformed as that of Daniel Quilp, whom, in character, allowing for their difference in social position, he very much resembled; for he positively gloated over the idea of making others suffer. This feeling of revenge now far outweighed any thought of advantage he might have gained by the marriage of Mabel and Arthur Denison.

"They had their turn," he said to himself, "and thwarted me; now comes my turn, and I'll thwart them."

Isaacson's retreating footsteps roused Denison from his listening attitude. He struck a light from his fusee box, and surveyed the cell in which he had been so unexpectedly immured. Seeing a wooden chair, he sat down on it, and waited as patiently as he could, until day-break, which came soon after five o'clock. Then he found himself in a sort of supplementary pantry, where two or three bottles of wine, that might be wanted in the dining-room, were placed on a shelf. He did not pay much attention to them, his chief thought being to make his escape as quickly and as quietly as he could. He did not anticipate much difficulty in forcing the door, but to his surprise, instead of yielding, he found it as firm as the solid wall, and his utmost strength was ineffectual to make it move even half an inch.

He continued his efforts for some time without any result, and then he began to have an idea of his enemy's tactics, and to understand the meaning of the strange sound he had heard against the door.

"Does he intend to starve me to death?" he asked himself; but the sight of the food and drink reassured him on that point; still the prospect was not encouraging.

Then he looked up at the oval window near the ceiling, which had iron bars imbedded in the wall, crossing each other for greater security. This, then, was the only way of

escape; so, mounting on a small table which stood against the wall, he opened the swing sash, and endeavoured to loosen the bars, but to no purpose.

He then bethought him of a small file for the nails which he had in his pocket, and with this tiny instrument he set to work for his deliverance.

He had hardly, however, commenced operations when he heard a stir in the house, and Mr. Isaacson's voice giving orders, first for breakfast, and then for a cab to take them to the station. He listened intently for some sound of Mabel, but in vain. He heard her step-father enter the dining-room, and give directions that her breakfast should be taken upstairs to her. Then he heard Blundell coming in, who was thus addressed by his master,

"I shall not require you, Samuel, here for the next few days; so that you can go and stay with your friends. Here is the key of the house: as soon as we are gone, lock the front door, and close the entrance gate. I have, as you see, fastened up that closet door for greater security; but I wish you to come here on Friday afternoon to remove the planks, and break open the lock, as I have not the key. Leave me your address, and I will send you further instructions before you come."

The look of crafty intelligence which passed between master and man made it very doubtful which of the two was the greater villain.

Samuel Blundell undertook to carry out the orders given, and anticipated with malicious satisfaction the appearance of the crest-fallen officer when he would be delivered from "durance vile."

Then came the sounds of departure, the front door was closed with a bang, and Arthur Denison was left alone with some very melancholy reflections.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN CUSTODY.

Nothing could be much more dismal, or apparently hopeless than this poor young man's situation, and it was not improved by the thought it was brought on entirely by his own impetuous rashness. It was as if by his own act he had excluded himself from a Paradise, into which he so unexpectedly had had a glimpse.

His agitation became almost uncontrollable when he considered how terribly he had compromised poor Mabel, and exposed her to the cruel insults of her step-father, from whom he had no power to protect or save her. Even if he had been free, he would not have known where or how to have found her, nor was it possible for her in any way to communicate with him.

The unutterable shame and disgrace of being let out by a serving-man, according to Mr. Isaacson's arrangement, was another drop of bitterness in his cup of misery. At last it overflowed by the remembrance suddenly borne in upon him of the important letter written to him by his uncle, which had been stolen, and which might be turned to the worst account.

No wonder if such an accumulation of troubles unnerved this unfortunate young man, and it was some time before he could regain sufficient composure to resume his work of liberation.

"After all," he thought, "had I not better cry out to the people in the next house to come and release me? But, then, again, what could I say to them? What excuse could I give for being in so strange a position? They would naturally send for a policeman, and then I should be in this dilemma: either I should be taken into custody as a burglar, or I must give my name and address, and say how and why I came here. That would only compromise my dearest Mabel, and I would rather die than do that; besides, I have no one to corroborate my story, and I might find myself

remanded by the magistrate, and be in worse case than I am now. It will be slow work, but other men have succeeded (he thought of Baron Trenck, and Silvio Pellico), and why should not I? There is no prison warder to come round and catch me. So here goes for patience and perseverance."

But the work was longer and harder even than he had feared; more than once he was tempted to give in. He had been weakened both in mind and body by the low Egyptian fever, from which he had scarcely recovered. Still the intense and ever-present dread of being found there by Blundell nerved him to persevere, and the wine which he drank freely on the second day, gave him a stimulus, which, to a certain extent, supplied the place of strength.

It was not, however, till about eight o'clock on the Friday morning that, with the energy of despair, he succeeded in breaking two of the bars, which he had almost filed through, and then wrenched them to and fro from their sockets till he loosened the rest, and was able to pull them from their holdings. Then it was easy work to get through the window and let himself down to the ground. The entrance gate opened from within, so that he could go out without attracting observation, and he had taken care not to leave his hat or overcoat behind him.

His excitement and weakness combined made him feel unequal to the drive to Charing Cross; and his dishevelled, unkempt look would have provoked inquiry. Fortunately, he found a hairdresser's shop near the corner of Church Street, and explaining that he had just come from a long journey, was soon made presentable.

A few doors farther on was a small but respectable hotel, which he entered. A motherly sort of landlady came forward, and could not help greeting him with,

"La, sir, you do look mortal bad. Is anything the matter? What can we get you?"

"A cup of tea, and rest," Arthur said, was all that he required; and he had no sooner laid down on the sofa in the little sitting-room into which he was shown, than he went off into a heavy sleep.

"Poor dear young man," said the landlady, compassionately; "I hope he's not going to be ill. I've half a mind

to send for a doctor ; but maybe, after all, it's only sleep that he wants, so we'll bide a bit and see."

As there were no symptoms of anything more than exhaustion, and as his breathing was regular, he was allowed to sleep on until late in the afternoon, when he woke of his own accord, and asked for something to eat and drink.

It was past six o'clock, and a cab being called, he continued his way to Charing Cross, not without many injunctions from the good-natured landlady to take care of himself.

On entering the hotel he found that he was the object of considerable attention. One of the officials of the hotel came up to him in rather an excited manner and said,

"You cannot think, Captain Denison, what anxiety we've been in about you. As you said nothing when you went out on Tuesday evening, and took nothing with you, we fully expected you back the same night, or, at any rate, the next day. But when two days passed and you did not return, we became very uneasy. Then this morning there came a telegram from the Mayor of Woodville, making inquiries about you—"

"What!" exclaimed Arthur in surprise, "from the Mayor of Woodville! Who is he? I never heard of him. What does he want to know about me?"

"I really cannot say, sir. He merely inquired if you were here; and there have been two or three persons asking after you to-day."

"What in the world do you mean?" demanded Arthur in astonishment. "I know no one in London, and no one is aware that I am here. There must be some strange mistake."

"We had a telegram from Mr. Robinson at 5.30 this afternoon, ordering a room, but he made no mention of you. I am afraid, sir, you have been unwell. I hope it has not been anything serious."

"Oh, no," replied Arthur, "nothing of any consequence. I suppose you've kept my room for me?"

"You'll find everything just as you left it, sir; and we are very glad to see you back again."

As it was now nearly seven o'clock, and the Dover train was

due at 7.15, Arthur soon came out again and went straight to the arrival platform. The train was punctual, and Mr. Robinson was in it. His surprise on seeing his nephew was very great.

"Why, what on earth are you doing here, Arthur? Did not you get my letter? Surely you have not been to Woodville and back again? How did you know I was coming by this train? Oh, yes, by my telegram. How dreadfully ill you are looking! I am afraid you must have been sadly pulled down by that Egyptian fever, but we'll soon set you up again. Come to my room, and we can talk while they're getting dinner ready."

The first damper on Arthur Denison's joy at seeing his uncle arose from his being obliged to explain, or rather not to explain, how he came to be in London instead of at Woodville. He had also to confess the loss of his pocket-book and money at the theatre.

"Oh, never mind, my boy," said Mr. Robinson; "we'll soon put that right. You need not have worried yourself about fifty pounds, specially as I was so anxious about that money at the Manor House. Did you go down on Wednesday? No. Well, what have you been doing in London? I did not know that you were acquainted with any one here."

"I am very sorry, sir," replied Arthur, "that I cannot answer your question, but it is impossible."

Mr. Robinson's face clouded over, and he pressed for information.

"Surely, my boy, you can trust your old uncle. Tell me everything frankly, and you shall have no cause to repent it. I've never been hard upon you yet, and I'm not going to begin to be so now."

To the old gentleman's utter astonishment, his nephew grasped his hand and burst into tears. Mr. Robinson could only suppose that his physical debility was greater than he thought, and he fancied that it might have been on that account that he had stayed on in London. So he let the matter drop, and exerted himself to cheer the young man up. Arthur felt ashamed of having given way to such emotion, and began to talk freely about other matters.

"Come in," said Mr. Robinson, as a waiter knocked at

the door. "What, is dinner ready? We'll be down directly."

"No, sir," was the reply, "not quite. There are two persons wishing to see Captain Denison."

"To see *me*?" exclaimed Arthur; "there must be some mistake. Did they give their names? Do they look like gentlemen?"

"One of them said it didn't matter about their names. They don't look not to say *exactly* like gentlemen, but they're very respectable."

"Very well; show them into a room downstairs," said Mr. Robinson, "and we'll come to them directly. I don't think, Arthur, that you're fit to be bothered about anything just at present, so I'll come with you. I wonder who they are; perhaps they've found your pocket-book."

The young man was greatly touched by his uncle's kindly thought for him, and they went down both together. On entering the room the captain exclaimed in a tone of pleased surprise,

"What, Archie Campbell, my good Archie Campbell! what lucky chance brought you here?" Then turning to Mr. Robinson, he continued, "My dear uncle, let me present to you that brave soldier who saved my life in Egypt; you remember I wrote to you about him. I am delighted to see you again."

With that he went up to the ventriloquist to grasp his hand, but the latter drew back with a look of horror on his face, and in a voice hoarse, and broken by emotion he cried out,

"It's true, it's too true that I saved your life. Would to God that I had let you fall by the bullets of the enemy, or had even shot you myself; but I did not know then, and could never for one moment have supposed—"

Inspector Stratton, who had brought Campbell with him to prevent the possibility of any mistake, now asked him in a half-whisper,

"Is he the right one?"

The soldier nodded assent, then the inspector said quietly, "Your name, sir, I believe, is Arthur Denison, Captain in the Hussars?"

"Certainly," replied Arthur; "and what then?"

"Why, sir, I have a very painful duty to perform. I am a detective officer, and under this warrant, which I hold, I am bound to take you into custody."

Arthur Denison passed his hand over his forehead in a state of perplexity, and said,

"I must be either mad, or dreaming."

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNACCOUNTABLE.

MR. ROBINSON was equally amazed, but recovering himself, came forward and asked,

"What is Captain Denison accused of? "

"Of a double murder and robbery," was the reply.

"Oh," said Mr. Robinson with a half smile of relief, "I was afraid he might have got into some serious scrape in town, but murder and robbery—no, that is too much. You must have made some mistake in the name. My nephew an assassin and thief! Besides, he has only just come back from Egypt."

"I am sorry, sir," said the inspector, politely, "that I am unable to enter into any discussion on that point. My duty is to execute the warrant placed in my hands, and I feel sure that Captain Denison will see how desirable it is to avoid anything like a scene or a scandal, and that he will accompany me quietly. I shall want you, Campbell, as a witness to identity."

"Oh, Arthur, my poor dear boy," stammered out Mr. Robinson, "what shall I do? how can I help you? I am quite overwhelmed by the suddenness of this fearful accusation. But bear up, and God will bring you safely through. Try to be brave and patient, and all will come right. Rest

assured that the trouble will soon pass. Don't be cast down."

"You may depend, sir," said the inspector, "on Captain Denison being treated with every consideration that the circumstances allow; and I will myself come back in about an hour."

When they had left, the poor old gentleman was quite overcome, and was forced to ask for assistance to remount the stairs, and waited most anxiously in his own room till the inspector returned.

A cab was at the door of the hotel, Campbell mounted on the box, and the order was given for Scotland Yard. Stratton then turning to his prisoner said, "I am bound to tell you frankly, Captain Denison, that appearances are terribly against you. The pocket-book which you left behind you—"

Here Arthur interrupted him hastily,

"My pocket-book, did you say? Why, that was stolen from me on Tuesday evening at the Adelphi. Where was it found, and why did not they come to me at once about it?"

Here it flashed into his mind that it was quite possible that he might have been sent for during his absence, so that he stopped abruptly, and it was rather a relief to find that they had already arrived at the police station.

When he heard the details, or rather the heads of the accusation, it would be difficult to say whether the feeling of horror or amazement predominated in his mind. Stratton, who was observing him very closely, was so struck by his bearing, that when the charge sheet had been signed, he said,

"I shall be glad to have a few words with you, sir, before I leave;" and he accompanied him to his cell. When they were alone he began,

"Captain Denison, I am about to take a somewhat unusual course, and to incur a very considerable amount of responsibility on your account. You are not bound to say one word to criminate yourself, but if you like to trust me, I will do all in my power to help you. First, will you tell me under what circumstances you lost your pocket-book?"

"Certainly," replied Denison, without any hesitation, and

he proceeded to relate exactly what occurred at the theatre, but could only give a general description of the person who had pushed up against him.

"Good," said the inspector; "you have only to account for the employment of your time from Tuesday evening till now, which of course you can do; and then, although I shall be obliged to take you before the magistrate at Woodville, I see no reason why you should not be at once released."

"I very much regret, Mr. Stratton," was the reply, "that I cannot give you the information you wish for."

"Why not?" asked the detective sharply.

"It is impossible, absolutely impossible. Nor can I give you my reasons, or any explanation of what may seem to you very extraordinary conduct. Still, I can assure you that I am as innocent of this dreadful crime as you are yourself."

"I am willing to accept your assurance, and therefore I entreat you all the more earnestly to tell me what I want to know."

The reply was the same, "Impossible."

"Well, Captain Denison," said the inspector, "I must leave you now, hoping that when I come to-morrow, I shall find that on reflection you will see what a fatal resolution you are taking, and that you will have come to what I must call a better and sounder mind. If not for your own sake, I hope you will think of Mr. Robinson."

He now returned to the hotel, taking Campbell with him, and went at once to Mr. Robinson's room, where they found the poor old man in a terrible state of prostration.

"I hope, sir," began Stratton, "that we may be able to relieve your anxiety, and *that* before long. You must remember that in the detective force our object is not to work out any particular theory of our own in a doubtful and difficult case, but to follow up carefully all traces we may find, even if they should seem to be opposed to the view we had previously taken. Now I may at once tell you frankly that within the last hour I have very much modified the opinion I had formed, and am now disposed to believe in your nephew's innocence."

"What!" interrupted Campbell in surprise, "after all you said to me at Woodville, after all the proof you gave me that Captain Denison must have committed this awful crime?"

"Yes," replied Stratton firmly, "in spite of all I said and believed then. I had come to the investigation without any previous knowledge of the parties concerned, and could only act on the evidence brought before me, though I was very much puzzled to account for the extraordinary oversight of the pocket-book, and for the fact of the letter having been only partially burnt. With your permission, sir," he continued, turning to Mr. Robinson, "I will continue what I was saying about our mode of working, as it may give you confidence and hope. In a case like this, depending as it does almost entirely on circumstantial evidence, and surrounded by mystery, it is necessary to be prepared for any number of surprises. This good man," nodding at Campbell, "has already been arrested on the same charge, but soon proved his innocence by an *alibi*, as I hope Captain Denison will do. I am satisfied that we must search for the criminal elsewhere. Still, I should tell you that there is one difficulty at the outset. Your nephew refuses absolutely to account for his proceedings from Tuesday evening till now; and though I pressed him very earnestly, it was to no purpose."

"Alas!" replied Mr. Denison, "he was just as reticent with me before your arrival, and showed the most extraordinary emotion when I pressed for his confidence. I had written to him to go down into the country for me on most important business, and as yet I have no idea why he did not go. But you have not told me where this crime—this double murder, I think you said—was committed."

"Is it possible?" began the detective; then making a motion to Campbell to be silent, he went on abruptly,

"The circumstances of this case are so sad, and we have gone through so much to-day, that before proceeding any further I must venture to trespass on your hospitality and ask for some brandy and water."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said the kind-hearted old man; then to the waiter, when he came, "Bring up a small bottle of brandy, the best you have in the house,

and some cold water," not dreaming for whom it was being ordered.

When it was brought Stratton still delayed, dreading the effect of the blow he was about to inflict. He mixed, what even Mr. Robinson could not help noticing was a very strong glass, and yet did not drink any. Then he took the Fifth Edition of the *Globe* from his pocket and said,

"Now, Mr. Robinson, sir, you must not allow yourself to be overcome too much by what you see here, you really mustn't. 'Murder at Woodville. Latest Particulars.'"

The words swam before the poor man's eyes, and but for the tumbler of brandy and water he would have fainted away. When he could speak, he said or rather gasped out,

"What is the meaning of this? For God's sake, tell me. What! John Armstrong, my faithful servant, done to death, and his little Mary! It must be a hideous dream. And you say Arthur is the murderer?"

Was it possible to conceive a greater succession of trying scenes, from morning to night, agony piled on agony? Even Stratton, accustomed to horror, prayed that he might be spared a repetition of the like. He soothed Mr. Robinson to the best of his power, sent to the chemist's for a sleeping draught, and left him, promising to return the first thing in the morning.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONSULTATION.

THEY were true to their appointment, and found Mr. Robinson anxiously expecting them. He looked very careworn. Stratton saw with an experienced eye that if he could not in some way divert his mind, the consequences

might, and probably would, be very serious. So he began at once,

"In our branch of the force, Mr. Robinson, we are obliged to turn every one we can to account, and you can be of most essential service to us. This is a case in which money will be indispensable—"

"Oh," cried Mr. Robinson, and it really seemed as if the feeling of his heart outran the expression of his lips, "pray do not speak about money. I began life as a comparatively poor man, and now I am wealthy, but I would gladly give up all I have—not to be assured of my poor boy's innocence, for that I never doubted for a moment, but to be able to have it *proved*, so that not the slightest stain might rest on his character."

"You may depend on our doing the best in our power, Mr. Robinson; you must not be surprised at my speaking about money, not as if we were stinted in the use of it, quite the contrary; but in cases such as this seems likely to be, it is of the greatest service to us to know that we can work freely. I may tell you that the Department deals with us most liberally, but that's the very reason why we don't like to take advantage of them. Every now and then the public read of an absconding defaulter, or thief, arrested in Australia, or the United States, perhaps at the moment of disembarking, as he looks round on the quay cautiously and trembling (while he was at sea he always feared putting foot on land again); or perhaps when first fears are lulled, he goes up the country in fancied security, till the hand laid on his shoulder tells him that the law is everywhere. But who thinks of the time, intelligence, and expenditure necessary for such a capture? And who thinks of the frequent failures in tracking the criminal? But money given without restriction is very valuable, as enabling us to employ many agencies that we should otherwise have scrupled to have used. So I think, Mr. Robinson, if you will kindly allow us to act with you, it will be to our mutual benefit."

The detective had purposely made this long speech in order to divert and compose the poor old gentleman's mind, and to a great extent he had been successful. He now proceeded,

"I will not trouble you with all the reasons by which I am induced to believe that this is a case of impersonation. Some one resembling your nephew has possessed himself of the pocket-book, and made this dreadful use of the information contained in it. I am only giving you my impressions, but they are sufficiently strong to lead me to follow up any clue I may find."

"Oh, Mr. Stratton," exclaimed Campbell excitedly, "you want to find some one who resembles Captain Denison. I can tell you of one, but (dejectedly) now I come to think of it, that would be of no use."

"That will be my business to decide," replied Stratton; "so out with it, man, and tell us what you mean."

"I don't see what good it can do," said the ex-Hussar; "but it just flashed into my mind, when you were speaking, that Captain Denison's servant in Egypt—James Barnett was his name—was not at all unlike him, and more than once he played some nice tricks by personating his master, though I don't believe it ever came to the captain's ears. But what's the use of talking of that? Egypt isn't in England, and as he's with his regiment, he couldn't have had anything to do with this affair."

Mr. Robinson now interposed. "When did you leave Egypt, my man?"

"About eight months ago, sir; as soon as I was discharged from hospital, after being wounded at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir."

"Oh, then," said Mr. Robinson, "I suppose you are that brave soldier who saved my nephew's life, and for whose benefit I placed something in the Savings Bank? Ah, no thanks, no thanks—I ought to have remembered what he said when he saw you yesterday evening, but this terrible trouble drove it out of my head. Well, now, I have something to say. I remember receiving a letter from my nephew about three months ago, in which he told me that he had been robbed by his servant, who had then deserted, probably the same man. But being anxious about his state of health and spirits, it passed out of my mind."

"But it will not pass out of *my* mind," said the inspector; "and I feel much obliged to you, for what I have no doubt will prove very valuable. But we must now leave you."

Endeavour to keep as calm as you can. One of us will be with you again this evening, and report progress. If Captain Denison will only think better of it, and give us the information about himself that we want, depend upon it all will be well."

So they left him. After the necessary formalities had been gone through, they started from Waterloo by the 11.15 a.m. train, reaching Woodville about half-past two. On the journey, again and again, Inspector Stratton did all in his power to shake the determination of his prisoner, but in vain. On any other point he spoke fully and freely, but with regard to the *alibi* he was inflexible. He gave, however, all the information he could about James Barnett, though it did not reach to much beyond the fact that he had deserted about three months before, after having committed various robberies, which were clearly traced to him.

He further mentioned the intimacy which existed between Barnett and Blundell, Mr. Isaacson's servant, of whom also he (Captain Denison) had a very bad opinion; and as he had left Cairo about the same time, it was possible they might both be together in London.

By the time they reached Woodville poor Arthur Denison was quite knocked up. His examination before Mr. Jolliffe, and a brother magistrate, who spared him as much as possible, completed his misery. The witnesses were bound over to appear at the assizes, and he just managed to reach Winchester. On his arrival at the jail, the medical officer was sent for, who at once ordered him to the Infirmary, where he lay for a long time prostrated by an attack of brain-fever, quite unconscious of all external objects, and utterly unable to make the smallest effort to establish his own innocence.

Mabel's name was almost the only sound that escaped his lips, but this was repeated again and again, with every intonation of love, anxiety, and despair.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BAZI BAZOUM ON THE TRACK.

POOR Arthur Denison's helplessness only nerved his friends to fresh exertions on his behalf. It is true that nothing was heard or seen of James Barnett, but his comrade, Samuel Blundell, was found without much difficulty at Mr. Isaacson's office in Austin Friars.

He was extremely disconcerted, when a detective officer (not Inspector Stratton, who had his own reasons for keeping in the background) asked him about James Barnett, of whose movements or whereabouts he professed entire ignorance. He did not deny that he had known him in Egypt, but said that he had deserted from the army before Mr. Isaacson left, and where he had gone to he could not say.

As we are already aware, this was anything but the truth, seeing that these two rascals had been in constant communication for a long time past; but they both felt that they were walking on very "thin ice," and these inquiries were not reassuring.

It may be remembered that when they parted on that Tuesday evening, fraught with so much coming evil and misery, it was agreed that they should meet at the Waterloo station on the following afternoon, when Blundell should give an assurance that Arthur Denison was well out of the way, and this, as we know, he was able to do.

He was equally exact in keeping his appointment on the Thursday morning. As soon as he saw James Barnett get out of the train, he perceived that something serious had happened; but to his extreme surprise, instead of trying to conceal himself, he remarked that Barnett seemed almost to court observation.

"Are you mad?" said Blundell; "every one is looking at you. Come along."

The only answer he got was, "A cab, directly, and tell the man to drive to Blackmoor Street."

Not a word was spoken on the way, but when they reached Russell Court, and entered the house without attracting notice, the long-drawn tension gave way, and Blundell was sent off for an immediate supply of brandy. With the Dutch courage thus gained, Barnett was able not indeed to give a full account of his proceedings, but to answer some questions.

"*Have I had any luck?*" Well, yes, I suppose so; that is, so far as collaring the swag;" and he produced roll upon roll of bank notes. "Ah, they look tempting, don't they? But I'd rather they were coin. What should you say, Sam, to a hundredweight, ay, and perhaps more, of good gold—a regular mine? *Where is it?* Why, stowed away to be sure, till we wants it. *Why didn't I bring it with me?* How could I, you bloomin' fool? I think I did pretty well to get it over a wall eight feet high, after a fight with a savage dog. No more such jobs for me. And just you shut up your potato-trap, for I'm blowed if I'll say a word more, till I can pull myself together a bit."

This meant a second supply of brandy, and even then the remembrance of what had taken place in the Manor House only the preceding night was too frightful. Outraged nature reasserted itself. A succession of trembling fits, suppressed groans, and clenched hands were but a feeble expression of internal agony, the foretaste of what was to come. A murderer caught red-handed knows comparatively little of the torture of what we shall endeavour, however feebly, to describe. First, foremost, and always, *flight*; from Cain downwards.

"Sam," said the murderer, when the first paroxysm was over, "I must leave these diggings as soon as I can, for I don't want to be trapped like a fox in his hole, and then to be scragged. I can tell you I feel like a tomtit with his feet in the bird-lime, so the sooner I take my hook the better. Somewhere down Whitechapel way, till we see how the cat jumps. It won't do to float these flimsies yet awhile. We shall have to be precious fly, I can tell you. But here goes for the present."

The proceeds of the first theft from the pocket-book proved to be sufficient for immediate necessities, and without much fear of detection; for, as James Barnett rightly

surmised, his late captain had been far too careless to have taken down the numbers of the notes.

Russell Court, Drury Lane, was soon abandoned, and Commercial Street, Whitechapel, would have been a much better hiding-place if it had not been that a shabby-genteel old man, who seemed to have known better days, had taken lodgings exactly opposite.

James Barnett—we beg pardon, Thomas Smithson—now entered on the second phase of the murderer's torment—*suspicion*, the chief element in which is uncertainty. Starting from the centre of conscience, the outside rings became wider and wider, till they seemed to lose themselves in the distance; and yet every passing breath drove them back again in concentric circles, till they returned with gathered strength to the centre they had come from; or, to vary the simile, it was like the blood coursing through the veins, only to be brought back in greater throbs and more feverish pulsations.

Jonas Chuzzlewit, though every nerve was strung to its extremest tension, thought every one he met seemed as if they were prepared to denounce him, yet overlooked the humble Nadgett; so James Barnett took but little notice of that seedy old Lushington, whom he often saw in the neighbouring public-houses, generally leaning his head on his hands, as if absorbed in his own struggle for existence.

He would perhaps have bestowed more notice on him if he had known, or could have seen, that this apparently listless man was never really alone. Sometimes it would be a stupid-looking waggoner who had just come up from Essex, with a load of hay; sometimes a young Jew from Bevis Marks, resplendent with cheap jewellery; sometimes a city missionary, with white tie and lanky hair, and a bundle of tracts sorted for distribution, but who was on wonderfully good terms with the barmaid; in each case as soon as James Barnett passed into the street, the swing door opened outwards again, and waggoner, Jew, or city missionary followed up this miserable Cain, till, like sentinel ants, they touched the antennæ of another on the watch, into whose hands they delivered up their trust.

He would have been far more uneasy even than he was, if

he could have known that every one of these emissaries gave in a report (longer or shorter, according to circumstances) to the broken-down old gentleman, who, unlike Mr. Nadgett in this respect, made a frequent appointment at the Three Nuns Tavern, Aldgate, with some one who never failed to keep it, some one who was believed to be connected with a Providential Insurance Company, lately started in the neighbourhood, and who, if he had been followed, which he was not, would have been seen to have submitted all the proposals for insurance to an agent who had engaged a room at the Charing Cross Hotel, and who bore a striking resemblance to the well-known Inspector Stratton, of the detective force.

There is an old Greek legend that in olden days Jupiter sent down from heaven a certain gad-fly, (*oistron*), as a pursuing power of justice; it must have been the ghost of this Nemesis that followed James Barnett by night and day, impelling him to ceaseless locomotion. The police injunction to "move on" was not needed in his case, for he was perpetually moving on. From "morn to dewy eve," in fair weather and in foul, he wandered hither and thither, not indeed aimlessly, but ineffectually, endeavouring to escape from himself; sometimes striding away to Bow, sometimes lounging listlessly in the Victoria Park, sometimes hanging about Liverpool Street stations; but go where he would, fast or slow, hurrying or sauntering, he was never lost sight of by some member or another of what we may call the London Vehmgericht.

After a time Mr. Robinson began to remonstrate with Inspector Stratton for not bringing this pursuit to an end, and capturing the criminal.

"Well, sir," was the reply, "I'll not deny but what every now and then we do delay a capture longer than is absolutely necessary, in order to put the guilty party off their guard; and to show the public that the police are neither so blind, so deaf, or so stupid as they are sometimes supposed to be. But in this case our work would be only half done if we did not recover the stolen property, as well as bring the murderer to justice. But the end is not far off."

To the list of miseries which we have already noted may

be added another, which he shared with those who have been in like evil case with himself, and that was *isolation*. His loneliness was awful, perhaps never greater than when in a crowd. He dared not make friends nor even acquaintances, lest a heedless word might betray him. So, day by day, the iron entered deeper and deeper into his soul, his own thoughts seemed to infect each other with retributive suffering, till he felt that he was doomed to perish, like the scorpion, by the venom of its own sting; and all this was magnified and intensified by a continued *sleeplessness*, which yielded neither to alcohol nor opiates.

It might be supposed that by this time the wretched man had sounded the depths of the nethermost hell which he carried within him, but he had yet to undergo a punishment so fearful and unexampled as only to be proportionate to the wickedness of his crime. For to him, already perturbed and almost maddened by remorse, came voices and words, not from the "vasty deep," but from his ordinary every-day haunts. The first time was when he was drinking at the bar of a public-house in the White-chapel Road, vainly trying to drink himself into a state of drunken forgetfulness; he heard the sharp, clear, well-known tones of his late captain's voice: "Trooper Barnett, attention." He actually let fall the glass which he was raising to his lips, and turned livid; and the barmaid was obliged twice to say, "Fourpence, if you please, sir, for the broken glass," before she could gain his attention. Then he hurried out as quickly as his legs would carry him.

The next time was also in a public-house, close to his lodging in Commercial Street (it was a house, by the way, which that broken-down old man used to frequent). He had just taken his usual quarter of brandy,—he generally now drank it neat,—when he heard the familiar voice of the sergeant-major call out,

"Trooper Barnett, your shoulder-strap."

Was this the fancy of a disordered brain? Impossible; for every one in the bar heard it, and looked surprised. Even the listless old man raised his head in astonishment, as there was no soldier present.

From this time, go where he would, these voices pursued

him. Perhaps he might be alone, looking in a shop window, and he heard some well-known parade order given out close to him; or perhaps he might be in a crowd, listening to a cheap Jack puffing his wares, when behind him he heard the familiar tones of a comrade, in the canteen, challenging him to a drink. He turned sharply round, and met the gaze of a slatternly woman with a baby in her arms.

Every utterance was connected with his late regiment, and invariably commenced with "Trooper Barnett." Not only were the words and phrases, but the very tones of his former comrades reproduced, till the brain of the distracted man reeled under the miraculous intervention.

When Blundell came to see him, which he did by night, and with the utmost caution, he told him of these mysterious and terrible voices; but the only consolation he got was,

"A clear case of D.T., old fellow."

Sam, in fact, was so much taken up with his own anxieties, that he had no time to bestow on those of others.

"I tell you what it is, sonny, I don't half like the look of things. That same bloke as came the other day has been watching our place, so the sooner we're off the better, and then he can watch till he gets bald."

After some consultation it was arranged that they should go the next day to Southampton, but in order to throw any possible pursuit off the scent, Blundell was to go by an early train to Portsmouth, efface himself, as it were, in the back streets of that dirty town, and then come on in the evening to Southampton, where Barnett would be waiting to receive him. Not a badly arranged plan, if only—but then, after all,—

"If 'ifs' and 'ans' were pots and pans,
There'd be no work for tinkers' hands."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AT SOUTHAMPTON.

SECURE in his disguise, which was the same that he had worn at the Adelphi, James Barnett found himself at the station at Southampton, on the afternoon of the day succeeding the interview he had had with Sam Blundell. He had travelled second class, as being less frequented, and, indeed, he had the carriage all to himself the whole way, with the exception of an elderly lady, who seemed an invalid, as she kept her veil down, sat in one corner, and did not utter a word. No one came to her at Southampton, but she evidently knew her way about.

Opposite the (departure) station is a small row of houses called Terminus Terrace, almost every one of which is dignified by the name of an hotel. Into one of these Barnett entered, and ordered a double-bedded room, as he said he expected a friend by the next train. The old lady had waited for a few minutes on the steps of the station, and then crossed over to the same hotel; she had a private room, where she ordered tea. He saw no more of her, but he heard the landlady thank her for recommending the hotel.

He did not fail to go round to the other side at 5.39 p.m., and was well satisfied to see his comrade, Sam Blundell, descend from the train. He also noticed the boots of the hotel go up to a passenger (who looked like a Dissenting minister, and who was accompanied by a respectable sailor), and offer a card of the hotel, to which he led the way.

"Can we have a double-bedded room, Mrs. Dodson? for I suppose that is your name, as I see it over the door," asked the gentleman with the white tie; "and can you give me any information about Mrs. Girling's settlement near Christchurch?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Dobson; "I think we can accommodate you. Ours is a double house, and so we have two double-bedded rooms on the first floor—one has just

been taken by a gentleman for self and friend ; you can have the other, and I think you'll find it clean and comfortable. Though we're so near to the station, it ain't no annoyance, as, except the mail, no train goes out after 9.25."

"Thank you, and about Mrs. Girling?"

"My husband will tell you more about her and her tribe than I can ; but I believe they're a queer lot. Here's the coffee-room, sir ; and as these gentlemen have ordered tea, perhaps you'll like to have it at the same time."

The first comers looked as if they would have preferred being alone, but of course could make no objection. After tea the home missionary said he had a little business in the town, but the sailor said he was tired, and would await his return.

The clerical gentleman's little business took him first to the Post Office, just round the corner, whence he despatched a telegram to London, the contents of which made the young lady who took it look rather curiously at him, but of course she made no remark. He then went straight to the Police Office, without once asking the way, and had a long interview with the superintendent.

When he returned, the sailor insisted on going to the public-house at the corner, and bringing in a bottle of Irish LL whiskey. After a faint remonstrance the missionary gave in to his companion, and took a glass of "hot with," but could not be induced to take any more, and shortly afterwards went up to bed.

Although the landlady had shown him his room on his arrival, he made the mistake of going into the first instead of into the second room ; but it seemed like a mistake on purpose ; for he gave a smile of satisfaction when he observed that there was a door of communication between the two rooms, and that the key was in the lock on the other side. He then quietly retired to his own room, unlocked this door, and set it slightly ajar.

The trio in the coffee-room evidently appreciated the merits of LL whiskey, though the sailor filled up his companions' tumblers much oftener than he did his own ; and in spite of his hospitality he seemed quite ignorant of good manners, as he never once drank their health.

At last the bottle was finished, and with sundry injunc-

tions from the landlord to go upstairs quietly, as his wife was asleep, they gained their respective rooms.

The tenants of No. 1 bedroom tumbled in without much regard to this injunction, and were soon asleep; one of them heavily, the other, James Barnett, in a dazed kind of slumber, neither asleep nor awake; he did not notice that the door of communication was partly open, but he suddenly found himself listening to his companion, who was saying to him (so he thought) in a husky voice,

"Jim, are you awake?"

"For God's sake, Sam, be careful. What is it?"

"All right, old pal," was the reply; "but I want to know what your little game is."

"Wait till to-morrow, then I'll tell you."

"Blowed if I do," answered his companion; "I ain't a-goin' to stand no bloomin' nonsense, so out with it at once, or I'll know the reason why."

"Well, well," said Barnett, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, "if you'll only keep quiet, I don't mind telling you that the shiners are buried in a copse outside the park wall, and to-morrow night we'll have 'em up. But there, that's enough; we can't be too careful. I don't altogether like the look of that Methody cove."

He was rather surprised by a responsive snore from his companion, but he turned on his own pillow to go to sleep; he had scarcely done so when he heard a girl's voice,

"Father, I've put everything ready for the captain in the red room. I hope he'll sleep comfortable. Good-night."

The shriek, nay, the yell which came from No. 1 bedroom, roused every one in the house in an instant, while the railway watchman came from across the road to know what was the matter.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Barnett to the landlord, who knocked loudly at the door; "only a nightmare."

There was no further disturbance during the night; but the next morning, when they all met in the little coffee-room for their respective breakfasts, the missionary at once began,

"My friend, I am sadly afraid that you must have something dreadful on your mind, or you would not have roused us from our slumbers as you did last night."

"Come, parson, stow that away," answered Blundell for his companion, who was dreadfully pale; "my mate's often took like that when he's had a drop too much; but no one hadn't no call to pay no attention to him. I hope no offence, gentlemen."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RUN TO EARTH.

As they were lounging at the window after breakfast, the landlord came in with a telegram.

"Mr. Jenkins, sir?" to the missionary as we have styled him; "and you're wanted, if you please, sir."

"All right," he said; "I'll come in a minute." Then turning to the sailor he continued,

"It's only from the Society to say that they want me to look up those gypsies in the Forest, and they wish you to lose no time in distributing the tracts down at the docks. Truly they seem in great haste, but work like ours won't wait."

Oh! Inspector Stratton, Inspector Stratton! when the telegram ran thus:

"Full instructions have been sent to Romsey and Woodville. See that the watch is not relaxed for a single instant."

He put the telegram in the fire, and continued,

"Stay here for a minute, while I go to the Local Secretary; for I suppose that's who it is. Ah, well, they're very zealous down here in the good cause."

So they were, but it was in the cause of justice rather than that of mercy. When he returned the coffee-room was empty, but the trio had gone into the smoking-room,

and were soon joined by a couple of commercial travellers. Trade was said to be rather dull, but it was perfectly astonishing to see how many agents for different houses frequented this little hotel.

The missionary and sailor left before long, but they were hardly missed, as the room was not empty for a minute.

The police arrangements of the town were very faulty, for instead of going on their beat, two constables were lounging about all the morning, and passed most of their time in the public-house at the corner.

The last commercial traveller came about two o'clock; he was in the hardware line from Sheffield. Except some biscuits, Barnett and his companion ate nothing, though they took a good many hairs of the dog that had bitten them the preceding evening. They went over to the station in good time for the 3.10 p.m. train to Romsey. They did not happen to look back, or they would have seen the landlord and his wife regarding them in a very significant manner, while Mrs. Dodson said,

"I'm afraid they won't have any spring mattresses to their beds to-night." What could she mean?

They found that the gentleman from Sheffield, and one or two more of the commercial travellers were bound for Romsey; but no one appeared to notice them, and they had a compartment to themselves.

Hitherto all seemed to have been well and successfully planned. Suspicion had been diverted, revenge satisfied, the prey almost grasped—almost, not quite. Yet once more the old Spanish proverb was to be fulfilled,

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small."

But to return to Romsey. The Sheffield traveller, who got out when they did, came up to them as they were standing on the platform, and recommended them a small inn near the station, where he said he was well known; and indeed he had a private interview with the landlord immediately after his arrival, in consequence of which a very special attention was paid to the gentlemen from Southampton.

They strolled through the town, and Barnett bought a couple of strong sacks at the corn-chandler's, then a small spade and fork, as he said "for botanizing."

About five o'clock he hired a horse and trap to go over to Dedworth, where he intended to sleep, and return the next day. As a good deposit was paid, no objection was made; but it was a curious coincidence, that the Sheffield traveller also hired a horse and trap, on which he paid no deposit.

While they went into Dedworth, to get their lamps lighted, he slipped by them, and drove off at full speed to Woodville, where he was evidently expected.

Before leaving the Dedworth road a strong farmer-looking man came up to him, said a few words, and then fell back, so as to let Barnett's trap pass him. Though he kept at some little distance behind, he never lost sight of them.

About the same time from the opposite direction came Superintendent Melville, with a small squad of constables, among whom might have been seen, if it had not been dark, Inspector Stratton from London, accompanied by the sailor, and the commercial traveller from Sheffield.

They had scarcely time to conceal themselves in the little copse, not far from the corner of the park wall, or from that chestnut tree that Edward Saunders had so much to say about, when the sound of wheels was heard approaching.

Carefully hiding themselves, like Red Indians on the watch, they saw the lamps detached from the gig, which was drawn up on the greensward at the side of the road, and quite invisible in the darkness, then the horse was taken out of the shafts, and tied to a tree, and then the double-dyed villains—there was little to choose between them—came cautiously forward with the sacks and spade which had been bought at Romsey.

"This is the place, Sam," said Barnett; "just at the foot of this old tree. No one would ever find the hole, as I took care to cover it well up with dead leaves. I'll hold the light, if you'll dig; but be very careful."

About two feet below the surface was a stout leathern sack, loosely tied round the neck with a cord.

Barnett placed his lantern on the ground, knelt down to

lift it up, and as Blundell looked on with greedy eyes he said,

"Safe and sound at last. Now we'll go—"

"To jail and the scaffold," thundered out a terrible voice.

Taken utterly by surprise, and at such disadvantage, resistance was impossible.

In less time than it takes to write it they were secured, handcuffed, and carried off to Woodville lock-up; and before long the superintendent's words came true, as Samuel Blundell was sentenced to penal servitude for life, and James Barnett expiated on the scaffold, so far as expiation was possible, the cruel and cold-blooded murder he had committed at Woodville Manor.

CHAPTER XL.

BEFORE THE CURTAIN.

ALL artists, whether with pencil or with pen, who appeal to the eye or the heart, look upon it as a consummation devoutly to be wished that they may part with their critics in a pleasant frame of mind, so that equal value may be given for "*impressions after*, as well as *before* letters."

It is in that spirit that we wish the curtain to fall on a group of those who have played their part in this little piece.

"Life is a drama of a few brief acts,
The actors shift, the scene is often changed,
Pauses and revolutions intervene,
The mind is set to many a varied tune,
And jars, and plays in harmony in turn."

"*Place aux dames.*" Our heroine, Mabel Seymour, has

reversed the action of nature in Egypt, for she has been presented to us mostly under clouded and weeping skies. But as a joyous harvest is promised to lachrymose sowers, so it often happens that a wet morning ushers in a bright and beautiful day.

We left poor Mabel in a pitiful plight—hurried away by her step-father, who marked, with malicious pleasure, the anxiety she dared not express. She was forced to listen to sneers and innuendoes to which she could not reply.

They had gone to a small house in the Essex Marshes near Grays, which Mr. Isaacson had bought, as a sort of retreat, when he had been engaged in questionable transactions abroad.

There they stayed, till Blundell came down and reported to his master, that on opening the barricaded door, he had found the cage empty and the bird flown.

Isaacson broke out into such wild and ungoverned rage, that Mabel fled to London by the next train, and took refuge with Mrs. Mildmay, who had been an old friend of her mother's, and who gladly gave her protection and sympathy.

This latter she needed to its utmost extent, when the news came of the terrible accusation hanging over her lover's head.

Nor was this sympathy confined to words. Mrs. Mildmay's lawyer soon put himself into communication with Inspector Stratton, and Mr. Robinson, who could not sufficiently admire the noble self-devotion shown by his nephew, and who speedily became one of Mabel's devoted admirers.

An examination of the house in Alpha Road sufficiently established the *alibi* which had been so anxiously sought for, even if the arrest of the real criminal had not conclusively proved Arthur Denison's entire innocence.

An intimation was given to Mr. Isaacson that it might be as well if he devoted his energies to Egypt, as they were not appreciated in England. Shortly after his return to that country, he imprudently went too near the mine when a charge of dynamite was being exploded, and received a fatal wound from a piece of rock.

The Birket estate now reverted to Mabel, who felt pleased

to think that she would not come to Arthur as a penniless bride. But how many long hours and days did she pass by his bedside in a private room in the infirmary at Winchester?

How often was her heart rent by the ceaseless cry, "Mabel, darling Mabel," till there came a day when the weary head was still, and the eyes, feebly opening, rested on the vision they had been longing for.

From that moment recovery began, and Arthur always said that it was the cool touch of her hand on his forehead which drove away the fever, and gave him strength to battle for life.

The following lines must be accepted in lieu of any longer description of the love-making which followed; for this chapter should be a short one, and is the last. This is what he said, and he meant it too, that—

"Her soft voice

Would be the sweetest music to his ear,
Awakening all the chords of harmony;
Her eye would speak as language to his soul,
More eloquent than aught that Greece or Rome
Could boast of in its best and happiest days;
Her smile would be his rich reward for toil;
Her pure transparent cheek, when pressed to his,
Would calm the fever of his troubled thoughts."

To tell the truth, these lines were not Arthur's, and it may be doubted whether he could have composed any so good; but he made them his own when he whispered them to Mabel, and she was quite content.

Mr. Robinson bought an estate in the Isle of Wight, having parted with Woodville Manor, not being able to bear the painful memories connected with it.

Inspector Stratton continues to be one of the most active and intelligent members of the detective force, and will soon be heard of in connection with a most difficult case, which he has followed up with singular patience and success.

As for dear old Bazi Bazoum, he is Mr. Robinson's most constant and valued attendant; but he always has a mournful look, for he cannot forget his beloved Mary Armstrong, and when asked to display his powers of ventriloquism, he

declares that he is keeping them for the amusement of the expected child of Arthur and Mabel Denison.

Come, little Alice, make haste and blow a kiss to the company before the curtain falls.

"*Nunc plaudite amici.*" In plain English, if you like this tale, recommend it to your friends. Good-bye.

THE END.

Stirling, August 1889-

POND'S EXTRACT.

The Great Curative.

The wonderful sympathy existing between POND'S EXTRACT and the human organism is shown in the fact that whenever there is an inflamed condition, POND'S EXTRACT arrests it at once, and enables nature to do her work without interruption.

It is no "cure all," though it certainly has a very extensive range of action. The long list of ailments it relieves and removes all proceed from but few sources, and can be summed up in two words, INFLAMMATION and HEMORRHAGES.

POND'S EXTRACT

Has no equal for allaying Inflammation and Hemorrhage, Rheumatism, Gout, Hemorrhoids, Wounds, Burns, Bruises, Cuts, etc., etc.

IN USE OVER FORTY YEARS!

POND'S EXTRACT

Is the only Proprietary Curative that is honoured with general Royal Patronage. We supply DIRECT the following Illustrious Personages:

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

OF ROUMANIA.

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND.

HER HIGHNESS PRINCESS OF NASSAU.

HER SERENE HIGHNESS PRINCESS OF WIED.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS PRINCE NICHOLAS OF NASSAU.

Pamphlet, with Medical Testimonials, etc., post free on application.

Sold in Bottles only at 1/1½, 2/3, 4/6, and 8/6. Can be obtained of all Chemists, or of the Sole Proprietors:

POND'S EXTRACT COMP., Ltd., 64, Gt. Russell St., London, W.C.

PROUT'S TOOTH BRUSHES.

GREAT care and nicety is required in the manufacture of Tooth Brushes, an art very difficult of attainment and only approached by careful, steady perseverance, and long practice. With this view Mr. Prout has for the last sixty years paid particular attention to this branch of his business. By employing skilled workmen and using nothing but the very best materials, PROUT'S TOOTH BRUSHES are recognised both at home and abroad as the best and most perfect Tooth Brushes extant.

For many years past these Brushes have been largely patronised by Americans visiting London; American ladies have over and over again pronounced PROUT'S TOOTH BRUSHES to be the best manufactured in England.

PROUT'S establishment in the Strand faces the Law Courts, and is one of the few bits of "Old London" now left standing. Americans are attracted to the establishment from the fact of their distinguished countryman—"the autocrat of the breakfast table"—Oliver Wendell Holmes, who, in his last work, "Our Hundred Days in Europe," refers to the old house where he had bought PROUT'S BRUSHES fifty years ago!

PROUT'S TOOTH BRUSHES

are made of every degree of hardness and variety of shape, including those recommended by the principal dentists of the day, and may be had of every Chemist throughout the United Kingdom.

Price, Four-row 8s. per dozen; Five-row 9s. 6d. per dozen; three Brushes 2s. 6d., by post 2s. 8d.

NOTE.—Tooth brushes retain their sweetness and cleansing properties far better by being put in a rack or allowed to remain on the wash stand. They should never be put into the Tooth-Tray and covered up, as the bristles are thereby rendered soft, and the Brush acquires a damp and unpleasant odour.

PROUT'S INDIA-RUBBER COURT PLASTER.

IN WHITE, PINK, AND BLACK,

Which does not wash off.

This useful toilet article has elicited universal approbation. It is so effectually waterproof as to bear washing over, from three to six days, with either hot or cold water—indeed, warm water appears to increase the adhesion, and render it more flexible; its great utility and vast superiority over the old-fashioned Court Plaster is invariably acknowledged.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE.

It is placed upon the wound in the usual manner, by wetting at the mouth, but requires longer moistening; it should be wetted on both sides.

A better plan, where practicable, is to immerse the Plaster in warm water for a second, and immediately apply it. It will amply repay this little extra trouble, as a second piece upon the same place will be seldom necessary.

Price 3s. per dozen pieces. To be had of all Chemists.—Ask for "Prout's Court Plaster."

PROUT'S EMOLLIENT OLD BROWN WINDSOR SOAP

(SIXTY YEARS IN USE),

Still remains unrivalled. It improves the general condition of the Skin, which becomes soft and silky, and after washing there is a conscious sensation of a most agreeable and refreshing character. Price 1s. 6d. per lb., or 3s. per dozen pieces.

PROUT & HARSANT,
BRUSH AND COMB MAKERS,
229, STRAND, LONDON,
(Opposite the Law Courts).

GIFT BOOKS AT EIGHTEENPENCE EACH.

Price

1/-
and
1/6

YOUTH'S LIBRARY OF WONDER & ADVENTURE.

Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 1s. 6d. ; picture wrapper, 1s. each.

- 1 A Journey into the Interior of the Earth. VERNE.
- 2 The English at the North Pole. By JULES VERNE.
- 3 The Ice Desert. By JULES VERNE.
- 4 Five Weeks in a Balloon. By JULES VERNE.
- 5 The Mysterious Document. By JULES VERNE.
- 6 On the Track. By JULES VERNE.
- 7 Among the Cannibals. By JULES VERNE.
- 8 Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. Part I.
9 Part II.
- 10 From the Earth to the Moon. By JULES VERNE.
- 11 Around the World in Eighty Days. By JULES VERNE.
- 12 Two Years Before the Mast. By R. H. DANA.
- 13 Round the Moon. By JULES VERNE.
- 14 Sandford and Merton. Illustrated.
- 15 Baron Munchausen : His Travels and Adventures. Illust.
- 16 Robinson Crusoe. With many Engravings.
- 17 A Boy's Life Aboard Ship, as it is. Illustrated.
- 18 Life in a Whaler: Adventures in Tropical Seas. Illust.
- 19 Grimm's Fairy Tales. Illustrated.
- 20 The Marvels of Nature. With 400 Engravings.
- 21 Wonders of the World. With 123 Engravings.
- 22 The Boy's Own Book of Manufactures and Industries of the World. With 365 Engravings.
- 23 Fifty Famous Men. With Portraits and other Illusts.
- 24 Great Inventors. With 109 Engravings.
- 25 The Boy's Handy Book of Games. Illustrated.
- 26 The Boy's Handy Book of Natural History. Illust.
- 27 Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. 100 Engravings.
- 28 Evenings at Home. With many Engravings.
- 29 Famous Boys. With Portraits, &c.
- 30 Arabian Nights' Entertainments. Illustrated.
- 31 Andersen's Popular Tales. Illustrated.
- 32 Andersen's Popular Stories. Illustrated.
- 33 The Young Marooners. By F. GOULDING. Illustrated.
- 34 The Crusades and Crusaders. By J. G. EDGAR. Illust.
- 36 Lion Hunting. By JULES GERARD. Illustrated.
- 37 The Backwoodsman. By Sir C. F. L. WRAXALL.
- 39 The Boy's Book of Modern Travel and Adventure.
- 40 From Log Cabin to White House. Illustrated.

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

GIFT BOOKS AT EIGHTEENPENCE.

Price

1/-
and
1/6

THE YOUTH'S LIBRARY—*continued.*

- 41 The Little Ragamuffins of Outcast London. By JAMES GREENWOOD. Illustrated.
- 42 England's Hero and Christian Soldier: The Life of General GORDON. Maps and Engravings.
- 43 Wild Sports of the World. GREENWOOD. Illustrated.
- 44 Brave British Soldiers and the Victoria Cross. Do.
- 45 Silas Horner's Adventures. GREENWOOD. Illustrated.
- 46 Robinson Crusoe. Demy 8vo. Profusely Illustrated.
- 47 The Noble Wife; or, Faithful unto Death. Illustrated.
- 48 The Triumph of Truth; or, Honesty the Best Policy.
- 49 The Faithful Servant; or, The King and the Peasant.
- 50 The Widow's Son; or, Bread upon the Waters. Illust.
- 51 The Greek Slave; or, Filial Love. Illustrated.
- 52 The Hero Martyr; or, The Faithful Protestant. Illust.
- 53 The Pilgrim Kings; or, The Star of Bethlehem. Illust.
- 54 The Child's Life of Jesus Christ. Illustrated.
- 55 The Good Sailor Boy; or, Adventures of Charley Morant.
- 56 The Christian Prince: A Historical Narrative. Illust.
- 57 The Faithful Missionary; or, Life in Greenland. Illust.
- 58 The Boy Pilot: An Iceland Narrative. Illustrated.
- 59 Fidelity Rewarded. By FRANZ HOFFMANN. Illust.
- 60 Virtue Triumphant; or, Anton, the Fisherman. Illust.
- 61 Famous Friendships of Eminent Men and Women. Do.
- 62 Romantic Tales of Royal Palaces. Illustrated.
- 63 Notable Women of Our Own Time. Portraits.

ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN LIBRARY.

Crown 8vo, picture wrapper, price *1s.* each; cloth gilt, *1s. 6d.*; superior editions, cloth gilt, *2s. 6d.* each. (The *1s. 6d.* and *2s. 6d.* editions of those marked (*) are embellished by the charming Illustrations of SCHULER, BAYARD, and others, the addition of which render them in every way perfect.)

1/-
1/6
and
2/6

- *1 Madame Therese.
- 2 The Conscript.
- *3 The Great Invasion.
- 4 The Blockade.
- *5 The States-General.
- *6 The Country in Danger.
- 7 Waterloo.
- *8 Dr. Matheus.
- *9 Stories of the Rhine.
- *10 Friend Fritz.

- *11 The Alsatian Schoolmaster.
- *12 The Polish Jew.
- 13 Master Daniel Rock.
- *15 Year One of the Republic.
- *16 Citizen Bonaparte.
- *17 Confessions of a Clarionet Player.
- *18 Campaign in Kabylia.
- *19 The Man Wolf.
- *20 The Wild Huntsman.

DOUBLE VOLUMES. Crown 8vo, picture boards, *2s.* each.

2/-

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Under Fire. [1789-1793.] 3 The Story of a Peasant, 5 The Mysterious Doctor. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 The Buried Treasure. 7 The Old Schoolmaster. |
|---|---|

5/-

In new and handsome binding, cloth gilt, gilt top, *5s.* each.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>The Story of a Peasant,
1789-1792. 57 Page Illusts.</p> | <p>The Story of a Peasant,
1793-1815. 60 Page Illusts.</p> |
|--|--|

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

POPULAR BOOKS OF HUMOUR.

WARD & LOCK'S HUMOROUS BOOKS.

In picture wrapper, price 1s. each.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Artemus Ward: His Book. | 51 Helen's Babies. Illust. |
| 3 Beeton's Riddle Book. | 52 The Barton Experiment. |
| 4 ——— Burlesques. | By Author of "Helen's Babies." |
| 5 ——— Book of Charades. | 53 The Mississippi Pilot. By |
| 6 The Biglow Papers. | MARK TWAIN. |
| 7 Saxe's Poems. | 54 The Jericho Road. |
| 8 Joe Miller's Jest Book. | 55 Some Other Babies. |
| 9 Connubial Bliss. | 56 Story of a Honeymoon. |
| 16 Pusley. By C. D. WARNER. | 58 Hans Breitmann's Ballads |
| 17 Back-Log Studies. Ditto. | 59 Other People's Children. |
| 18 Sandy Bar. BRET HARTE. | Sequel to "Helen's Babies." |
| 19 Roaring Camp. Ditto. | 60 Cent. per Cent. B. JERROLD. |
| 20 The Heathen Chinee. Do. | 61 That Husband of Mine. |
| 21 Hood's Wit and Humour. | 62 Two Men of Sandy Bar. |
| 22 Whims. By THOMAS HOOD. | By BRET HARTE. |
| 23 Oddities. Ditto. | 63 Grown-up Babies. Illust. |
| 24 Innocents Abroad. TWAIN. | 64 Other People. Ditto. |
| 25 New Pilgrim's Progress. | 65 Folks in Danbury. |
| By MARK TWAIN. | 66 My Wife's Relations. |
| 26 Jerrold's Jokes and Wit. | 67 My Mother-in-Law. |
| 27 Marjorie Daw. ALDRICH. | 69 The Scripture Club of |
| 29 Jumping Frog. M. TWAIN. | Valley Rest. JOHN HABBERTON. |
| 30 Letters to Punch. By | 70 That Girl of Mine. |
| ARTEMUS WARD. | 71 Bessie's Six Lovers. |
| 31 Artemus Ward among the | 72 Mark Twain's Nightmare. |
| Mormons. | Illustrated. |
| 32 That Dreadful Boy, Trotty | 73 Bret Harte's Hoodlum |
| 33 Eye Openers. M. TWAIN. | Band, and other Stories. |
| 34 Practical Jokes. Ditto. | 74 Bret Harte's Deadwood |
| 35 Screamers. Ditto. | Mystery, Tales and Sketches by |
| 36 Awful Crammers. | F. C. BURNAND and others. Illus- |
| 37 Babies and Ladders. | trated by JOHN PROCTOR, &c. |
| 38 Holmes' Wit and Humour. | 75 The Tradesmen's Club. |
| 39 Josh Billings: His Sayings. | Illustrated by MATT. STRETCH |
| 40 The Danbury Newsman. | and others. |
| 41 Mystery of Mr. E. Drood. | 77 Mrs. Mayburn's Twins. |
| 42 Shaving Them. | By Author of "Helen's Babies." |
| 43 Mr. Brown on Mrs. Brown. | 78 The Adventures of an |
| 44 Sensation Novels. By | Amateur Tramp. Illustrated. |
| BRET HARTE. | 79 Transformations. By |
| 46 Mr. Sprouts: His Opinions. | MAX ADELER. Illustrated. |
| 49 Major Jack Downing. | 80 The Drolleries of a Happy |
| 50 The Pagan Child, and other | Island. Illustrated. |
| Sketches. By BRET HARTE. | 81 Mischievous Boys; or, |
| | Aunt Saracen's Legacies. |

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

WARD & LOCK'S SHILLING NOVELS.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Capt. Macdonald. LANG. | 42 A Face Illumined. E. P. ROE. |
| 2 Clever Criminals. Ditto. | 43 He Fell in Love with His |
| 4 Flyers of the Hunt. MILLS. | Wife. Ditto. |
| 5 The Forger's Wife. LANG. | 44 Driven Back to Eden. Ditto. |
| 6 Life of a Racehorse. MILLS. | 45 to 52 Tales of the Border. |
| 8 My Friend's Wife. LANG. | 8 Vols. Professor WILSON. |
| 9 The Secret Police. LANG. | 53 From Jest to Earnest. |
| 10 Stable Secrets. MILLS. | E. P. ROE. |
| 11 A Story with a Vengeance. | 54 Near to Nature's Heart. |
| A. B. REACH and S. BROOKS. | Ditto. |
| 13 Too Clever by Half. LANG. | 55 Without a Home. Ditto. |
| 14 Too Much Alike. Ditto. | 56 A Knight of the 19th Cen- |
| 16 Yankee Humour. Illust. | tury. E. P. ROE. |
| 17 Charles O'Malley. LEVER. | 57 His Sombre Rivals. Ditto. |
| 18 Little Ragamuffins. JAMES | 58 Madeleine. JULIA KA- |
| GREENWOOD. | VANAGH. |
| 19 Uncle Tom's Cabin. | 59 Two Legacies. J. G. BET- |
| 21 The King of the Beggars. | TANY. |
| 22 Diary of a late Physician. | 60 A Woman's Reputation. |
| SAMUEL WARREN. | O. CRAWFURD. |
| 23 Ten Thousand a-Year. Do. | 61 Blossoming of an Aloe. |
| 24 Jack Hinton. C. LEVER. | Mrs. CASHEL HOBY. |
| 25 Oonah: The Story of a | 62 Abbot of Aberbrothock. |
| Crime. By GEO. PAYN. | WM. ADAMSON. |
| 26 Golden Shackles. | 63 Lost and Won. Mrs. CRAIK. |
| 27 Race for a Wife. HAWLEY | 64 Marriage Bonds. Author |
| SMART. | of "Hedged with Thorns." |
| 28 Guilty or Not Guilty? | 65 Veronica. Mrs. TROLLOPE. |
| Mrs. G. SMYTHIES. | 66 The Nine of Hearts. B. L. |
| 29 A Dead Town. C. BARNARD. | FARJEON. |
| 30 Riven Bonds. E. WERNER. | 67 Les Miserables. Complete. |
| 31 Sacred Vows. Ditto. | VICTOR HUGO. |
| 32 An Original Belle. ROE. | (Also in picture boards, 2s.) |
| 33 An Amateur Lunatic. | 68 Monsieur Lecoq. Com- |
| HOPE. | plete. EMILE GABORIAU. |
| 34 Elsie Venner. HOLMES. | 69 The Earth Trembled. |
| 35 The Whiteboy. Mrs. S. C. | E. P. ROE. |
| HALL. | 70 Found, yet Lost. Ditto. |
| 36 Down the Ravine. C. EG- | 71 The Fair God. WALLACE. |
| BERT CRADDOCK. | 72 Count of Monte Cristo. |
| 37 Wheel of Life. MILLS. | Complete. DUMAS. |
| 38 Barriers Burned Away. | 73 Strange Tales. GREEN- |
| E. P. ROE. | WOOD. |
| 39 Opening of a Chestnut | 74 Comic Stories. "BILL |
| Burr. Ditto | NYE." |
| 40 What Can She Do? Ditto. | 75 Choice Anecdotes, &c. |
| 41 A Day of Fate. Ditto. | 76 A Study in Scarlet. By |
| | A. CONAN DOYLE. |

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

POPULAR SIXPENNY BOOKS.

WARD, LOCK & CO.'S SERIES OF

SIXPENNY NOVELS & POPULAR BOOKS.

Those marked () can also be had in neat cloth binding, 1s.
All these books are printed in clear, readable type and bound in attractive
wrappers. Many are Illustrated.*

- 1*Waverley. By Sir W. SCOTT.
- 2*Kenilworth. By the Same.
- 3*Ivanhoe. By the Same
- 4*The Antiquary. By the Same.
- 5*Paul Clifford. BULWER.
- 6*Last Days of Pompeii. Do.
- 7*Pelham. By LYTON BULWER.
- 8*Eugene Aram. By the Same.
- 9*Midshipman Easy. By Capt. MARRYAT.
- 10*Japhet in Search of a Father. By Captain MARRYAT.
- 11*Jacob Faithful. By the Same.
- 12*Peter Simple. By the Same.
- 13*The Pickwick Papers. By CHARLES DICKENS. Illustrated.
- 14*Nicholas Nickleby. By CHARLES DICKENS. Illustrated.
- 15 Guy Mannering. Sir WALTER SCOTT.
- 16*Valentine Vox. COCKTON. With the Original Illustrations.
- 17*Charles O'Malley. By CHARLES LEVER. Illustrated.
- 18 Handy Andy. LOVER. With Illustrations.
- 19 Harry Lorrequer. LEVER.
- 32 The Bride of Lammermoor. Sir WALTER SCOTT.
- 35 Carlyle's Cromwell's Letters and Speeches. Vol. 1.
- 36 _____ Vol. 2.
- 37 _____ Vol. 3.
- 38 Arabian Nights' Entertainments. With Illustrations.
- 39*Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress 100 Engravings by T. DALZIEL.
- 40*Longfellow's Poetical Works
- 41 Don Quixote. With 100 Illustrations by T. JOHANNOT.
- 43*Hood's Own. With the Original Illusts. by the Author.
- 44*Shakespeare's Complete Works. 800 pages.
- 45 Carlyle's French Revolution: The Bastille.
- 46 Carlyle's French Revolution: The Constitution.
- 47 Carlyle's French Revolution: The Guillotine.
- 48 Carlyle's Sartor Resartus.
- 49 Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-Worship.
- 50 Carlyle's Past & Present.
- 51 Helen's Babies. J. HABBERTON
- 52 My Mother-in-Law.
- 53 That Husband of Mine.
- 54 The Scripture Club of Valley Rest. By the Author of "Helen's Babies."
- 56 That Dreadful Boy, Trotty.
- 57*Democracy: An American Novel.
- 58*But Yet a Woman. By ARTHUR S. HARDY.
- 59 The Art of Money-Getting. By P. T. BARNUM.
- 60 A Bad Boy's Diary.
- 61 Blunders of a Bashful Man By Author of "A Bad Boy's Diary."
- 62 Catching a Husband. Ditto.
- 63 Uncle Remus: His Sayings and Doings. Illustrated.
- 64 Yellowplush Papers. By W. M. THACKERAY.
- 65 Mr. and Mrs. Spoopendyke.
- 76*Shane Fadh's Wedding. By WILLIAM CARLETON.
- 77*Larry M'Farland's Wake. By the Same.
- 78*Party Fight and Funeral. By the Same.
- 79*The Midnight Mass. Ditto.
- 80*Phil Purcel, the Pig-driver. By the Same.
- 81*An Irish Oath. By the Same.
- 82*Going to Maynooth. Ditto.
- 83*Phelim O'Toole's Courtship. By the Same.
- 84*Dominick, the Poor Scholar. By the Same.
- 85*Neal Malone. By the Same.

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

POPULAR SIXPENNY BOOKS.

Those marked () also to be had in neat cloth binding, price 1s.*

- | | |
|---|---|
| 86 X. Y. Z : A Detective Story.
By A. K. GREEN. | 112 Captain Macdonald. By
JOHN LANG. |
| 87 The Secret Police. LANG. | 113 That Girl of Mine. |
| 88* From Log Cabin to White
House: The Life of GARFIELD.
Illustrated. | 114 Poor Papa. PORTER. |
| 89* Life of General Gordon.
Illustrated. | 115 Hans Breitmann's Bal-
lads. |
| 90 Boomerang Shots. By
BILL NYE. Illustrated. | 116 Hood's Wit and Humour. |
| 91 Hits and Skits. By the
Same. Illustrated. | 117 Hood's Whims. Illust. |
| 92 A Legend of Polecat
Hollow. TOBE HODGE. Illust. | 118 Hood's Oddities. Illust. |
| 93 The Innocents Abroad.
By MARK TWAIN. | 119 Artemus Ward: His Book. |
| 94 The Heathen Chinees. By
BRET HARTE. | 120 Life at the Gold Mines. |
| 95 The Bowsham Puzzle.
By Author of "Helen's Babies." | 121 Warnccliffe, the Wan-
derer. |
| 96 Artemus Ward's Letters
to "Punch." | 122 A Gold-Hunter's Adven-
tures. |
| 97 The Sword of Damocles.
By the Author of "The Leav-
enworth Case." | 123 The Household Skeleton. |
| 98 A Strange Disappear-
ance. Ditto. | 124 Adventures of a Mid-
shipman. |
| 99 Hand and Ring. Ditto. | 125 The Brave Old Salt. |
| 100 The Jumping Frog. By
MARK TWAIN. | 126 The Light Dragoon. |
| 101 The Leavenworth Case.
By A. K. GREEN. | 127 Gambler's Last Pledge. |
| 102 Shadowed by Three. By
L. L. LYNCH. | 128 Bad Boy's Start in Life. |
| 104 The Pagan Child. By
BRET HARTE. | 129 Sandy Bar. BRET HARTE. |
| 105 Bessie's Six Lovers. By
T. B. ALDRICH. | 130 Cudjo's Cave. By J. T.
TROWBRIDGE. |
| 106 Eye Openers. By MARK
TWAIN. | 131 The Three Scouts. Ditto. |
| 107 Sensation Novels. By
BRET HARTE. | 132 Mark Twain's Night-
mare, &c. Illustrated. |
| 108 Martyrs by Proxy. By
JAMES GREENWOOD. | 133 Diary of a late Physician.
134 _____ Part II. |
| 109 A Queer Showman. Do. | 135* Ten Nights in a Bar-room |
| 110 The Journal of a Woman.
By OCTAVE FEUILLET. | 136 Thompson's Prodigal,
&c. By BRET HARTE and others. |
| 111 Connubial Bliss. DOWTY. | 137 Theo. By MRS. BURNETT. |
| | 139 The Gent. A. SMITH. 32mo. |
| | 140 The Flirt. Ditto. |
| | 141 Evening Parties. Ditto. |
| | 142 Monte Cristo. DUMAS. |
| | 142A _____ Part 2. |
| | 143 A Dead Town. Illust. |
| | 144 Oldenthorpe's Legacy.
Illustrated. |
| | 145 Screamers. MARK TWAIN. |
| | 146 From the Earth to the
Moon. By JULES VERNE. |

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

POPULAR SIXPENNY BOOKS.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>147 The English at the North Pole. JULES VERNE.</p> <p>148 The Fitz-Boodles Papers. By W. M. THACKERAY.</p> <p>149 New Pilgrim's Progress. By MARK TWAIN.</p> <p>150 20,000 Leagues under the Sea. By JULES VERNE. Pt. I.</p> <p>151 ——— Part II.</p> <p>152 Original Readings and Recitations. CHILDE-PEMBERTON.</p> <p>153 A Christmas Carol, &c. DICKENS. 32mo.</p> <p>154 Ten Thousand a-Year. By S. WARREN.</p> <p>155 ——— Part II.</p> <p>156 The Mississippi Pilot. By MARK TWAIN.</p> <p>157 On the Track. VERNE.</p> <p>158 The Ice Desert. Ditto.</p> <p>159 Practical Jokes. By MARK TWAIN and ARTEMUS WARD.</p> <p>160 Orpheus C. Kerr Papers.</p> <p>161 King of the Beggars.</p> <p>162 Wit and Humour. HOLMES.</p> <p>163 The Soldier Lover. EDMOND ABOUT.</p> <p>164 Squibs and Drolleries.</p> <p>165 Romances of Real Life. LEIGH HUNT.</p> <p>166 Defeated. By H. LYNCH.</p> <p>168 Workers of the Sea. HUGO.</p> <p>169 Round the Moon. VERNE.</p> <p>170 Journey to Interior of Earth. Ditto.</p> <p>171 Five Weeks in a Balloon. Ditto.</p> <p>172 Rival Detectives. Author of "Shadowed by Three."</p> <p>173 The Diamond Coterie. Do.</p> <p>174 Margaret Catchpole. By Rev. R. COBBOLD.</p> <p>175 "Ninety-Three." HUGO.</p> <p>176 Detective's Daughter. Author of "Shadowed by Three."</p> <p>177 Out of a Labyrinth. Ditto.</p> <p>178 Worth his Weight in Gold. By A. ASHMORE.</p> | <p>179 On a Winter's Night. By Sir GILBERT CAMPBELL, Bart.</p> <p>183 The Spy. FENIMORE COOPER.</p> <p>184 The Pilot. Ditto.</p> <p>185 Lionel Lincoln. Ditto.</p> <p>186 Last of the Mohicans. Do.</p> <p>187 The Prairie. Ditto.</p> <p>188 The Water-Witch. Ditto.</p> <p>189 The Pathfinder. Ditto.</p> <p>190 Eve Effingham. Ditto.</p> <p>195 Remarkable Impostors.</p> <p>196 Celebrated Claimants.</p> <p>197 Alsatian Schoolmaster. By ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN.</p> <p>198 Les Miserables. I. HUGO.</p> <p>199 ——— II. Ditto.</p> <p>201 Crescent and Cross. By ELIOT WARBURTON.</p> <p>202 Amusing Anecdotes, &c.</p> <p>203 Quips and Cranks, &c.</p> <p>204 The Detective's Dilemma. By EMILE GABORIAU.</p> <p>205 Detective's Triumph. Do.</p> <p>206 History of a Crime. HUGO.</p> <p>207 A Deadly Peril. By EMILE GABORIAU.</p> <p>207 Mr. Barnes of New York.</p> <p>208 The Bad Boy & his Sister.</p> <p>209 Vivian Grey. BEACONSFIELD.</p> <p>210 Coningsby. Ditto.</p> <p>211 Henrietta Temple. Ditto.</p> <p>212 Venetia. Ditto.</p> <p>213 Sybil. Ditto.</p> <p>214 Contarini Fleming. Ditto.</p> <p>215 Alroy. Ditto.</p> <p>216 The Young Duke. Ditto.</p> <p>217 An Undiscovered Crime.</p> <p>218 A Mountain Mystery. By Author of "Shadowed by Three."</p> <p>221 The Outlaw of Iceland. VICTOR HUGO.</p> <p>222 Stormlight. J. E. MUDDOCK.</p> <p>391 The Prince of the House of David. By INGRAHAM.</p> <p>392 The Throne of David. Do.</p> <p>393 The Pillar of Fire. Ditto.</p> |
|--|---|

WARD, LOCK & CO., London, Melbourne, and New York.

WORTH REMEMBERING

As a Medicine unequalled for efficacy:—

DR. SCOTT'S BILIOUS AND LIVER PILLS

AS A GENERAL FAMILY MEDICINE.

BILIOUS COMPLAINTS

Cured by taking Two Pills at Bedtime.

INDIGESTION, DYSPEPSIA AND WIND

Cured by taking One Pill each day before dinner, or every night.

LOSS OF APPETITE

Cured by taking One Pill between breakfast and dinner, twice or thrice a week.

HEADACHE AND DIZZINESS OF THE EYES

Cured by taking Two Pills at Bedtime.

LASSITUDE AND NERVOUS DISORDERS

Cured by taking one Pill at Bedtime until better, then one or two occasionally.

PERFECT HEALTH

Can be ensured by the occasional use of these Pills, as they strengthen the system.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Can take them with safety, as they contain no Mercury.

Some unprincipled vendors, in order to make a larger profit, will try to persuade you to buy medicine prepared by themselves; do not do so, but insist on having

Dr. Scott's Bilious and Liver Pills,

wrapped in a square green package, and bearing round the Box a Government Stamp with the name and address: "William Lambert, 8, King William Street, Charing Cross." These genuine Pills are sold by all respectable medicine vendors, or post free for 14 or 34 Stamps, from the Proprietor.

W. LAMBERT, 173, Seymour Place, London, W.

FURNISH THROUGHOUT (REGD.)

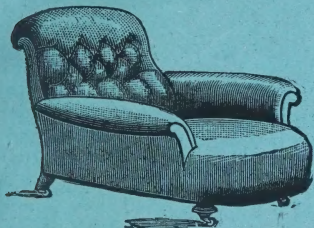
OETZMANN & Co.

67, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, and 79,

HAMPSTEAD ROAD,

(NEAR TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, LONDON.)

ORDERS PER POST RECEIVE PROMPT AND CAREFUL ATTENTION.

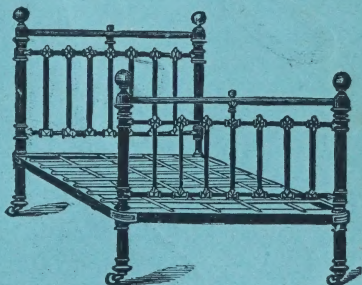


LUXURIOUS DIVAN EASY CHAIR.

52s. 6d.

SUPERIOR DITTO, 75s.

An immense variety of Easy Chairs for Dining-rooms, Drawing-rooms, Libraries, Bedrooms, Clubs, Hotels, &c. always on show.



STRONG BLACK AND BRASS FRENCH BEDSTEAD.

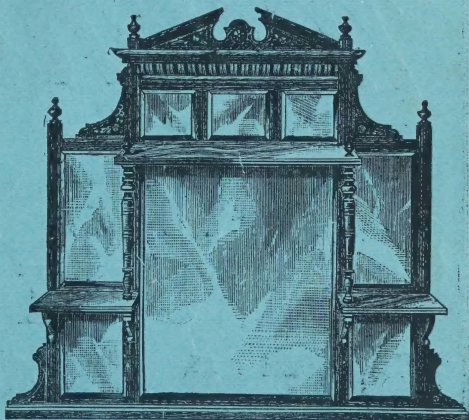
Width—3 ft.	3 ft. 6 in.	4 ft.	4 ft. 6 in.
13s. 3d.	13s. 9d.	14s. 6d.	15s.



OCCASIONAL TABLE.

With Shelf under. Walnut or Ebonized. Top 17 in. by 17 in., 26½ in. high, 8s. 9d.

A large assortment of Occasional Tables; &c., always on view in the Show Rooms.



WALNUT OR EBONIZED OVERMANTEL.

With Eight bevelled-edge Silvered Glass Plates, 4 ft. wide by 3 ft. 6 in. high, £2 5s.

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE,

THE BEST FURNISHING GUIDE EXTANT,

POST FREE.

Good



morning

**HAVE YOU
USED
PEARS' SOAP?**